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TO

ENGLAND

I Dedicate this Book,

THE GLORIFICATION OF HER POET.

I TELL ENGLAND THE TRUTH;

BUT, AS A LAND ILLUSTRIOUS AND FREE, I ADMIRE HER,

AND AS AN ASYLUM, I LOVE HER.

VICTOR HUGO.

HAUTEVILLE HOUSE, 1864.

PREFACE.

THE true title of this work should be: *Apropos to Shakespeare.* The desire of *introducing,* as they say in England, before the public, the new translation of Shakespeare, has been the first motive of the author. The feeling which interests him so profoundly in the translator should not deprive him of the right to recommend the translation. However, his conscience has been solicited on the other part, and in a more binding way still, by the subject itself. In reference to Shakespeare all questions which touch art are presented to his mind. To treat these questions, is to explain the mission of art; to treat these questions, is to explain the duty of human thought towards man. Such an occasion for speaking truths imposes a duty, and he is not permitted, above all at such an epoch as ours, to evade it. The author has comprehended this. He has not hesitated to turn the complex questions of art and civilization on their several faces, multiplying the horizons every time that the perspective has displaced itself, and accepting every indication that the subject, in its rigorous necessity, has offered to him. This expansion of the point of view has given rise to this book.

HAUTEVILLE HOUSE, 1864.

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PART I.

BOOK I.

SHAKESPEARE—HIS LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

TWELVE years ago, in an island adjoining the coast of France, a house, with a melancholy aspect in every season, became particularly sombre because winter had commenced. The west wind, blowing then in full liberty, made thicker yet round this abode those coats of fog that November places between earthly life and the sun. Evening comes quickly in autumn; the smallness of the windows added to the shortness of the days, and deepened the sad twilight in which the house was wrapped.

The house, which had a terrace for a roof, was rectilinear, correct, square, newly whitewashed—a true Methodist structure. Nothing is so glacial as that English whiteness; it seems to offer you the hospitality of snow; one dreams with a seared heart of the old huts of the French peasants, built of wood, cheerful and dark, surrounded with vines.

To the house was attached a garden of a quarter of an acre, on an inclined plane, surrounded with walls, cut in steps of granite, and with parapets, without trees, naked, where one could see more stones than leaves. This little uncultivated domain abounded in tufts of marigold, which flourish in autumn, and which the poor people of the country eat baked with

the eel. The neighbouring seashore was hid from this garden by a rise in the ground; on this rise there was a field of short grass, where some nettles and a big hemlock flourished.

From the house you might perceive, on the right, in the horizon, on an elevation, and in a little wood, a tower, which passed for haunted; on the left you might see the dyke. The dyke was a row of big trunks of trees, leaning against a wall, planted upright in the sand, dried up, gaunt, with knots, ankylosès, and patellas, which looked like a row of tibias. Reverie, which readily accepts dreams for the sake of proposing enigmas, might ask to what men these tibias of three fathoms in height had belonged.

The south façade of the house looked on the garden, the north façade on a deserted road.

A corridor at the entrance to the ground-floor, a kitchen, a greenhouse, and a courtyard, with a little parlour, having a view of the lonely road, and a pretty large study, scarcely lighted; on the first and second floors, chambers neat, cold, scantily furnished, newly repainted, with white blinds to the windows. Such was this lodging, with the noise of the sea ever resounding.

This house, a heavy, right-angled white cube, chosen by those who inhabited it apparently by chance, perhaps by intentional destiny, had the form of a tomb.

Those who inhabited this abode were a group—to speak more properly, a family; they were proscribed ones. The most aged was one of those men who, at a given moment, are *de trop* in their own country. He had come from an assembly; the others, who were young, had come from a prison. To have written, that is sufficient motive for bars. Where shall thought conduct except to a dungeon?

The prison had set them free into banishment.

The oldest, the father, had in that place all his own

except his eldest daughter, who could not follow him. His son-in-law was with her. Often were they leaning round a table or seated on a bench, silent, grave, thinking all of them, and without saying it, of those two absent ones.

Why was this group installed in this lodging, so little suitable? For reasons of haste, and from a desire to be as soon as possible anywhere but at the inn. Doubtless, also, because it was the first house to let that they had met with, and because proscribed people are not lucky.

This house—which it is time to rehabilitate a little and console, for who knows if, in its loneliness, it is not sad at what we have just said about it? a home has a soul;—this house was called Marine Terrace. The arrival was mournful; but after all, we declare, the stay in it was agreeable, and Marine Terrace has not left to those who then inhabited it anything but affectionate and dear remembrances. And what we say of that house, Marine Terrace, we say also of that island of Jersey. Places of suffering and trial end by having a kind of bitter sweetness which, later on, causes them to be regretted. They have a stern hospitality which pleases the conscience.

There had been, before them, other exiles in that island. This is not the time to speak of them. We mention only that the most ancient of whom tradition, a legend, perhaps, has kept the remembrance, was a Roman, Vipsanius Minator, who employed his exile in augmenting, for the benefit of his country's dominion, the Roman wall of which you may still see some parts, like bits of hillock, near a bay named, I think, St. Catherine's Bay. This Vipsanius Minator was a consular personage, an old Roman so infatuated with Rome that he stood in the way of the Empire. Tiberius exiled him into this Cimmerian island, *Cæsarea;* according to others, to one of the Orkneys. Tiberius did more; not content with exile, he or-

dained oblivion. It was forbidden to the orators of the senate and the forum to pronounce the name of Vipsanius Minator. The orators of the forum and the senate, and history, have obeyed; about which Tiberius, of course, did not have a doubt. That arrogance in commanding, which proceeded so far as to give orders to men's thoughts, characterized certain ancient governments newly arrived at one of those firm situations where the greatest amount of crime produces the greatest amount of security.

Let us return to Marine Terrace.

One morning at the end of November, two of the inhabitants of the place, the father and the youngest of the sons, were seated in the lower parlour. They were silent, like shipwrecked ones who meditate.

Without it rained, the wind blew, the house was as if deafened by the outer roaring. Both went on thinking, absorbed perhaps by this coincidence between a beginning of winter and a beginning of exile.

All at once the son raised his voice and asked the father:

"What thinkest thou of this exile?"

"That it will be long."

"How dost thou reckon to fill it up?"

The father answered—

"I shall look on the Ocean."

There was a silence. The father resumed the conversation:

"And you?"

"I," said the son—"I shall translate Shakespeare."

CHAPTER II.

THERE are men, oceans in reality.

These waves, this ebb and flow, this terrible go-and-come, this noise of every gust, these lights and shadows, these vegetations belonging to the gulf, this democracy of clouds in full hurricane, these eagles in the foam, these wonderful gatherings of stars reflected in one knows not what mysterious crowd by millions of luminous specks, heads confused with the innumerable, those grand errant lightnings which seem to watch, these huge sobs, these monsters glimpsed at, this roaring, disturbing these nights of darkness, these furies, these frenzies, these tempests, these rocks, these shipwrecks, these fleets crushing each other, these human thunders mixed with divine thunders, this blood in the abyss; then these graces, these sweetnesses, these *fêtes*, these gay white veils, these fishing-boats, these songs in the uproar, these splendid ports, this smoke of the earth, these towns in the horizon, this deep blue of water and sky, this useful sharpness, this bitterness which renders the universe wholesome, this rough salt without which all would putrefy; these angers and assuagings, this whole in one, this unexpected in the immutable, this vast marvel of monotony inexhaustibly varied, this level after that earthquake, these hells and these paradises of immensity eternally agitated, this infinite, this unfathomable, all this can exist in one spirit, and then this spirit is called genius, and you have Æschylus, you have Isaiah, you have Juvenal, you have Dante, you have Michael Angelo, you have Shakespeare, and looking at these minds is the same thing as to look at the Ocean.

CHAPTER III.

1. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE was born at Stratford-on-Avon, in a house under the tiles of which was concealed a profession of the Catholic faith beginning with these words, "I, John Shakespeare." John was the father of William. The house, situate in Henley-street, was humble; the chamber in which Shakespeare came into the world wretched; the walls whitewashed, the black rafters laid crosswise; at the further end a tolerably large window with two small panes, where you may read to-day, among other names, that of *Walter Scott.* This poor lodging sheltered a decayed family. The father of William Shakespeare had been alderman; his grandfather had been bailiff. Shakespeare signifies shake-lance; the family had for coat-of-arms an arm holding a lance—allusive arms, which were confirmed, they say, by Queen Elizabeth in 1595, and apparent, at the time we write, on Shakespeare's tomb in the church of Stratford-on-Avon. There is little agreement on the orthography of the word Shake-speare, as a family name: it is written variously—Shakspere, Shakespere, Shakespeare, Shakspeare; in the eighteenth century it was habitually written Shakespear; the actual translator has adopted the spelling Shakespeare, as the only true method, and gives for it unanswerable reasons. The only objection that can be made is that Shakspeare is more easily pronounced than Shakespeare, that cutting off the *e* mute is perhaps useful, and that for their own sake, and in the interests of literary currency, posterity has, as regards surnames,

a claim to euphony. It is evident, for example, that in French poetry the orthography Shakspeare is necessary. However, in prose, and convinced by the translator, we write Shakespeare.

2. The Shakespeare family had some original drawback, probably its Catholicism, which caused it to fall. A little after the birth of William, Alderman Shakespeare was no more than "butcher John." William Shakespeare made his *début* in a slaughter-house. At fifteen years of age, with sleeves tucked up in his father's shambles, he killed the sheep and calves "pompously," says Aubrey. At eighteen he married. Between the days of the slaughter-house and the marriage he composed a quatrain. This quatrain, directed against the neighbouring villages, is his *début* in poetry. He there says that Hillbrough is illustrious for its ghosts and Bidford for its drunken fellows. He made this quatrain (being tipsy himself), in the open air, under an apple-tree still celebrated in the country in consequence of this Midsummer Night's Dream. In this night and in this dream where there were lads and lasses, in this drunken fit, and under this apple-tree, he discovered that Anne Hathaway was a pretty girl. The wedding followed. He espoused this Anne Hathaway, older than himself by eight years, had a daughter by her, then twins, boy and girl, and left her; and this wife, vanished from Shakespeare's life, appears again only in his will, where he leaves her the worst of his two beds, "having probably," says a biographer, "employed the best with others." Shakespeare, like La Fontaine, did but sip at a married life. His wife put aside, he was a schoolmaster, then clerk to an attorney, then a poacher. This poaching has been made use of since then to justify the statement that Shakespeare had been a thief. One day he was caught poaching in Sir Thomas Lucy's park. They threw him in prison; they commenced proceedings. These being spitefully

followed up, he saved himself by flight to London. In order to gain a livelihood, he sought to take care of horses at the doors of the theatres. Plautus had turned a millstone. This business of taking care of horses at the doors existed in London in the last century, and it formed then a kind of small band or corps that they called "Shakespeare's boys."

3. You may call London the black Babylon—gloomy the day, magnificent the night. To see London is a sensation; it is uproar under smoke—mysterious analogy, the uproar is the smoke of noise. Paris is the capital of one side of humanity. London is the capital of the opposite side—splendid and melancholy town! Life there is a tumult; the people there are an ant-hill; they are free, and yet dovetailed. London is an orderly chaos. The London of the sixteenth century did not resemble the London of our day; but it was already a town without bounds. Cheapside was the High-street; St. Paul's, which is a dome, was a spire. The plague was nearly as much at home in London as at Constantinople. It is true that there was not much difference between Henry VIII. and a Sultan. Fires, also, as at Constantinople, were frequent in London, on account of the populous parts of the town being built entirely of wood. In the streets there was but one carriage, the carriage of her Majesty. Not a cross-road where they did not cudgel some pickpocket with that drotsch-block which is still retained at Groningen for thrashing the wheat. Manners were rough, almost ferocious; a fine lady rose at six, and went to bed at nine. Lady Geraldine Kildare, to whom Lord Surrey inscribed verses, breakfasted off a pound of bacon and a pot of beer. Queens, the wives of Henry VIII., knitted mittens, and did not even object to their being of coarse red wool. In this London, the Duchess of Suffolk took care of her hen-house, and with her dress tucked up to her knees, threw corn to the ducks in the court

below. To dine at midday was a late dinner. The pleasures of the upper classes were to go and play at "hot cockles" with my Lord Leicester. Anne Boleyn played there; she knelt down, with eyes bandaged, rehearsing this game, without knowing it, in the posture of the scaffold. This same Anne Boleyn, destined to the throne, from whence she was to go further, was perfectly dazzled when her mother bought her three linen chemises at sixpence the ell, and promised her for the Duke of Norfolk's ball a pair of new shoes worth five shillings.

4. Under Elizabeth, in spite of the anger of the Puritans, there were in London eight companies of comedians, those of Newington Butts, Earl Pembroke's company, Lord Strange's retainers, the Lord-Chamberlain's troop, the Lord High Admiral's troop, the company of Blackfriars, the children of St. Paul's, and, in the first rank, the Showmen of Bears. Lord Southampton went to the play every evening. Nearly all the theatres were situate on the banks of the Thames, which increased the number of watermen. The play rooms were of two kinds: some merely open tavern-yards, a trestle leaning against a wall, no ceiling, rows of benches placed on the ground, for boxes the windows of the tavern. The performance took place in the broad daylight and in the open air. The principal of those theatres was the Globe; the others, which were mostly closed play-rooms, lighted with lamps, were used at night; the most frequented was Blackfriars. The best actor of Lord Pembroke's troop was called Henslowe; the best actor at Blackfriars was Burbage. The Globe was situate on Bank Side. This is known by a document at Stationers' Hall, dated 26th November, 1607:—"His Majesty's servants playing usually at the Globe on the Bank Side." The scenery was simple. Two swords laid crosswise, sometimes two laths, signified a battle; a shirt over the coat signified a

knight; the petticoat of one of the comedians' wives on a broom-handle, signified a palfrey caparisoned. A rich theatre, which made its inventory in 1598, possessed "the limbs of Moors, a dragon, a big horse with his legs, a cage, a rock, four Turks' heads, and that of the ancient Mahomet, a wheel for the siege of London, and a 'bouche d'enfer.'" Another had "a sun, a target, the three feathers of the Prince of Wales, with the device 'Ich Dien,' besides six devils and the pope on his mule." An actor besmeared with plaster and immoveable, signified a wall; if he spread his fingers, it meant that the wall had crevices. A man laden with a fagot, followed by a dog, and carrying a lantern, meant the moon; his lantern represented the moonshine. People may laugh at this *mise en scène* of moonlight, become famous by the "Midsummer Night's Dream," without imagining that there is in it a gloomy anticipation of Dante. See "L'Inferno," Chant xx. The robing-room of these theatres, where the comedians dressed themselves pell-mell, was a corner separated from the stage by a rag of some kind stretched on a cord. The robing-room at Blackfriars was shut off by an ancient piece of tapestry which had belonged to one of the guilds, and represented a blacksmith's workshop; through the holes in this partition, flying in rags and tatters, the public saw the actors redden their cheeks with brick-dust, or make their mustaches with a cork burnt at a tallow-candle. From time to time, through an occasional opening of the curtain, you might see a face grinning in a mask, peeping to see if the time for going on the stage had arrived, or the smooth chin of a comedian, who was to play the part of a woman. "Glabri histriones," said Plautus. These theatres were frequented by noblemen, scholars, soldiers, and sailors. They acted there the tragedy of "Lord Buckhurst," "Gorbuduc," or "Ferrex and Porrex," "Mother Bombic," by Lilly, in

which the phip-phip of sparrows was heard; "The Libertine," an imitation of the "Convivado de Piedra," which had a European fame; "Felix and Philomena," a fashionable comedy, performed for the first time at Greenwich, before "Queen Bess;" "Promos and Cassandra," a comedy dedicated by the author, George Whetstone, to William Fleetwood, recorder of London; "Tamerlane," and the "Jew of Malta," by Christopher Marlowe; farces and pieces by Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, and Thomas Kid; and lastly, mediæval comedies. For just as France has her "l'Avocat Pattelin," so England has her "Gossip Gurton's Needle." Whilst the actors gesticulated and ranted, the noblemen and officers, with their plumes and band of gold lace, standing or squatting on the stage, turning their backs, haughty and easy in the midst of the constrained comedians, laughed, shouted, played at cards, threw them at each other's heads, or played at post and pair; and below in the shade, on the pavement, among pots of beer and pipes, you might see the "stinkards" (the mob). It was by that very theatre that Shakespeare entered on the drama. From being the guardian of horses, he became the shepherd of men.

5. Such was the theatre in London about the year 1580, under "the great queen." It was not much less wretched, a century later, at Paris, under "the great king;" and Molière, at his *début*, had, like Shakespeare, to make shift with rather miserable playhouses. There is in the archives of the "Comédie Française" an unpublished manuscript of four hundred pages, bound in parchment and tied with a band of white leather. It is the diary of Lagrange, a comrade of Molière's. Lagrange describes also the theatre where Molière's company played by order of Mr. Rateban, superintendent of the king's buildings; "three beams, the frames rotten and shored up, and half the room roofless and in ruins." In another place, by date Sunday,

15th March, 1671, he says "the company have resolved to make a large ceiling over the whole room, which, up to the said date (15th) has not been covered, save by a large blue cloth suspended by cords." As for lighting and heating this room, particularly on the occasion of the extraordinary expenses necessary for the performance of "Psyche," which was by Molière and Corneille, we read: "Candles, thirty livres; door-keeper, for wood, three livres." This was the style of playhouse which "the great king" placed at the disposal of Molière. These bounties to literature did not impoverish Louis XIV. so much as to deprive him of the pleasure of giving, for example, at one and the same time, two hundred thousand livres to Lavardin, and the same to D'Epernon; two hundred thousand livres, besides the regiment of France, to the Count de Médavid; four hundred thousand livres to the Bishop of Noyon, because this bishop was Clermont-Tonnerre, a family that had two patents of Count and Peer of France, one for Clermont and one for Tonnerre; five hundred thousand livres to the Duke of Vivonne, and seven hundred thousand livres to the Duke of Quintin-Lorges, besides eight hundred thousand livres to Monseigneur Clément de Bavière, Prince-Bishop of Liége. Let us add that he gave a thousand livres pension to Molière. We find in Lagrange's journal in the month of April, 1663, this remark: "About the same time, M. de Molière received, as a great wit, a pension from the king, and has been placed on the civil list for the sum of a thousand livres." Later, when Molière was dead and interred at St. Joseph, "Chapel of ease to the parish of St. Eustache," the king pushed patronage so far as to permit his tomb to be "raised a foot out of the ground."

6. Shakespeare, as we see, remained as an outsider a long time on the threshold of theatrical life. At length he entered. He passed the door and got behind the scenes. He succeeded in becoming call-boy,

vulgarly, a "barker." About 1586 Shakespeare was barking with Greene at Blackfriars. In 1587 he gained a step. In the piece called "the Giant Agrapardo, King of Nubia, worse than his late brother, Angulafer," Shakespeare was entrusted with carrying the turban to the giant. Then from a supernumerary he became actor, thanks to Burbage, to whom, by an interlineation in his will, he left thirty-six shillings, to buy a gold ring. He was the friend of Condell and Hemynge—his comrades whilst alive, his publishers after his death. He was handsome; he had a high forehead, a brown beard, a mild countenance, a sweet mouth, a deep look. He took delight in reading Montaigne, translated by Florio. He frequented the Apollo tavern, where he would see and keep company with two *habitués* of his theatre, Decker, author of the "Gull's Hornbook," in which a chapter is specially devoted to "the way a man of fashion ought to behave at the play," and Dr. Symon Forman, who has left a manuscript journal, containing reports of the first representations of the "Merchant of Venice," and "A Winter's Tale." He used to meet Sir Walter Raleigh at the Siren Club. Somewhere about that time, Mathurin Régnier met Philippe de Béthune at "*la Pomme de Pin.*" The great lords and fine gentlemen of the day were rather prone to lend their names in order to start new taverns. At Paris the Viscount de Montauban, who was a Créqui, founded "*Le tripot des onze mille Diables.* At Madrid, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the unfortunate admiral of the *Invincible,* founded the "*Puño-en-rostro,*" and in London Sir Walter Raleigh founded the "Siren." There you found drunkenness and wit.

7. In 1589, when James VI. of Scotland, looking to the throne of England, paid his respects to Elizabeth, who, two years before, on the 8th February, 1587, had beheaded Mary Stuart, mother of this James, Shakespeare composed his first drama, "Pericles."

In 1591, whilst the catholic king was dreaming, after a scheme of the Marquis d'Astorga, of a second Armada, more lucky than the first, inasmuch as it never put to sea, he composed "Henry VI." In 1593, when the jesuits obtained from the pope express permission to paint "the pains and torments of hell," on the walls of "the chamber of meditation" of Clermont College, where they often shut up a poor youth, who the year after, became famous under the name of Jean Châtel, he composed "Taming the Shrew." In 1594, when, looking daggers at each other and ready for battle, the King of Spain, the Queen of England, and even the King of France, all three said "my good city of Paris," he continued and completed "Henry VI." In 1595, whilst Clement VIII. at Rome was solemnly aiming a blow at Henry IV. by laying his crosier on the backs of Cardinals du Perron and d'Ossat, he wrote "Timon of Athens." In 1596, the year when Elizabeth published an edict against the long points of bucklers, and when Philip II. drove from his presence a woman who laughed when blowing her nose, he composed "Macbeth." In 1597, when this same Philip II. said to the Duke of Alba "you deserve the axe," not because the Duke of Alba had put the Low Countries to fire and sword, but because he had entered into the king's presence without being announced, he composed "Cymbeline" and "Richard III." In 1598, when the Earl of Essex ravaged Ireland, bearing on his headdress the glove of the virgin Queen Elizabeth, he composed the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," "King John," "Love's Labour Lost," "The Comedy of Errors," "All's Well that Ends Well," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "The Merchant of Venice." In 1599, when the Privy Council, at her Majesty's request, deliberated on the proposal to put Dr. Hayward to the rack for having stolen some of the ideas of Tacitus, he composed "Romeo and

Juliet." In 1600, whilst the Emperor Rudolph was waging war against his rebel brother and sentencing his son, murderer of a woman, to be bled to death, he composed "As You Like It," "Henry IV.," "Henry V.," and "Much Ado about Nothing." In 1601, when Bacon published the eulogy on the execution of the Earl of Essex, just as Leibnitz, eighty years afterwards, was to find out good reasons for the murder of Monaldeschi, with this difference however, that Monaldeschi was nothing to Leibnitz, and that Essex had been the benefactor of Bacon, he composed "Twelfth Night; or, What you Will." In 1602, whilst in obedience to the pope, the king of France, styled "renard de Béarn" by Cardinal Aldobrandini, was counting his beads every day, reciting the litanies on Wednesday, and the rosary of the Virgin Mary on Saturday, whilst fifteen cardinals, assisted by the heads of the chapter, opened the discussion on Molinism at Rome, and whilst the Holy See, at the request of the crown of Spain, "was saving Christianity and the world" by the institution of the congregation "de Auxiliis," he composed "Othello." In 1603, when the death of Elizabeth made Henry IV. say, "she was a virgin just as I am a catholic," he composed "Hamlet." In 1604, whilst Philip III. was losing his last footing in the Low Countries, he wrote "Julius Cæsar" and "Measure for Measure." In 1606, at the time when James I. of England, the former James VI. of Scotland, wrote against Bellarmin the "Tortura Forti" and faithless to Carr began to look sweetly on Villiers, who was afterwards to honour him with the title of "Your Filthiness," he composed "Coriolanus." In 1607, when the University of York received the little Prince of Wales as doctor, according to the account of Father St. Romuald "with all the ceremonies and the usual fur gowns," he wrote "King Lear." In 1609, when the magistracy of France, placing the

scaffold at the disposition of the king, gave upon trust a *carte blanche* for the sentence of the Prince de Condé "to such punishment as it might please his majesty to order," Shakespeare composed "Troilus and Cressida." In 1610, when Ravaillac assassinated Henry IV. by the dagger, and the French parliament assassinated Ravaillac by the process of quartering his body, Shakespeare composed "Antony and Cleopatra." In 1611, whilst the Moors, driven out by Philip III., and in the pangs of death, were crawling out of Spain, he wrote the "Winter's Tale," "Henry VIII.," and "The Tempest."

8. He used to write on flying sheets, like nearly all poets. Malherbe and Boileau are almost the only ones who have written on quires of paper. Racan said to Mdlle. de Gournay—"I have seen this morning M. de Malherbe sewing with coarse grey thread a bundle of white papers, on which will soon appear some sonnets." Each of Shakespeare's dramas, composed according to the wants of his company, was in all probability learnt and rehearsed in haste by the actors from the original itself, as they had not time to copy it; hence, in his case as in Molière's, the mislaying of manuscripts which were cut into parts. Few or no entry-books in those almost itinerant theatres; no coincidence between the time of representation and the publication of the plays: sometimes not even a printed copy, the stage the sole publication. When the pieces by chance are printed, they bear titles which bewilder us. The second part of Henry VI. is entitled "The first part of the War between York and Lancaster." The third part is called "The true tragedy of Richard, Duke of York." All this enables us to understand why so much obscurity rests on the dates when Shakespeare composed his dramas, and why it is difficult to fix them with precision. The dates that we have just given, and which are here brought together for the first

time, are pretty nearly certain; notwithstanding, some doubt still exists as to the years when the following were written, or indeed played—"Timon of Athens," "Cymbeline," "Julius Cæsar," "Antony and Cleopatra," "Coriolanus," and "Macbeth." Here and there we meet with barren years; others there are of which the fertility seems excessive. It is, for instance, on a simple note by Meres, author of the "Treasure of Wit," that we are compelled to attribute to the year 1598 the creation of six pieces: "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," the "Comedy of Errors," "King John," "Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Merchant of Venice," and "All's Well that Ends Well," which Meres calls "Love's Labour Gained." The date of "Henry VI." is fixed, for the first part at least, by an allusion which Nash makes to this play in "Pierce Penniless." The year 1604 is given as that of "Measure for Measure," inasmuch as this piece had been represented on Stephen's Day of that year, of which Hemynge makes a special note; and the year 1611 for "Henry VIII.," inasmuch as "Henry VIII." was played at the time of the fire of the Globe Theatre. Various circumstances—a disagreement with his company, a whim of the Lord Chamberlain—sometimes compelled Shakespeare to change from one theatre to another. "Taming the Shrew" was played for the first time in 1593, at Henslowe's theatre; "Twelfth Night" in 1601, at Middle Temple Hall; "Othello" in 1602, at Harefield Castle. "King Lear" was played at Whitehall during Christmas (1607) before James I. Burbage created the part of Lear. Lord Southampton, recently set free from the Tower of London, was present at this performance. This Lord Southampton was an old habitué of Blackfriars; and Shakespeare, in 1589, had dedicated the poem of "Adonis" to him. Adonis was the fashion at that time; twenty-five years after Shakespeare, the Chevalier Marini wrote

a poem on Adonis which he dedicated to Louis XIII.

9. In 1597 Shakespeare lost his son, who has left as his only trace on earth one line in the death-register of the parish of Stratford-on-Avon: "1597. August 17. Hamnet. Filius William Shakespeare." On the 6th September, 1601, his father, John Shakespeare, died. He was now the head of his company of comedians. James I. had given him in 1607 the lease of Blackfriars, and afterwards that of the Globe. In 1613 Madame Elizabeth, daughter of James, and the Elector-palatine, king of Bohemia, whose statue may be seen in the ivy at the angle of a big tower at Heidelberg, came to the Globe to see the "Tempest" performed. These royal attendances did not save him from the censure of the Lord Chamberlain. A certain interdict weighed on his pieces, the representation of which was tolerated, and the printing now and then forbidden. On the second volume of the register at Stationers' Hall you may read to-day on the margin of the title of three pieces, "As You Like It," "Henry V.," "Much Ado about Nothing," the words "4 Augt. to suspend." The motives for these interdictions escape us. Shakespeare was able, for instance, without raising objection, to place on the stage his former poaching adventure and make Sir Thomas Lucy a buffoon (Judge Shallow), show the public Falstaff killing the buck and belabouring Shallow's people, and push the likeness so far as to give to Shallow the arms of Sir Thomas Lucy—an outrageous piece of Aristophanism by a man who did not know Aristophanes. Falstaff, in Shakespeare's manuscripts, was written Falstaffe. In the meantime his circumstances had improved, as later they did with Molière. Towards the end of the century he was rich enough for a certain Ryc-Quiney to ask, on the 8th October, 1598, his assistance in a letter which bears the inscription—"To my amiable friend and countryman William

Shakespeare." He refused the assistance, as it appears, and returned the letter, found since among Fletcher's papers, and on the reverse of which this same Ryc-Quiney had written—"*Histrio! Mima!*" He loved Stratford-on-Avon, where he was born, where his father had died, where his son was buried. He there purchased or built a house, which he christened "New Place." We say, bought or built a house, for he bought it, according to Whiterill, and he built it according to Forbes, and on this point Forbes disputes with Whiterill. These cavils of the learned about trifles are not worth being searched into, particularly when we see Father Hardouin, for instance, completely upset a whole passage of Pliny by replacing *nos pridem* by *non pridem.*

10. Shakespeare went from time to time to pass some days at New Place. In these short journeys he met halfway Oxford, and at Oxford the Crown Hotel, and in the hotel the hostess, a beautiful, intelligent creature, wife of the worthy innkeeper, Davenant. In 1606 Mrs. Davenant was brought to bed of a son whom they named William, and in 1644 Sir William Davenant, created knight by Charles I., wrote to Lord Rochester, "Know this, which does honour to my mother, I am the son of Shakespeare," thus allying himself to Shakespeare in the same way that in our days M. Lucas Montigny claimed relationship with Mirabeau. Shakespeare had married off his two daughters, Susan to a doctor, Judith to a merchant; Susan had wit, Judith knew not how to read or write, and signed her name with a cross. In 1613 it happened that Shakespeare, having come to Stratford-on-Avon, had no further desire to return to London. Perhaps he was in difficulties. He had just been compelled to mortgage his house. The contract deed of this mortgage, dated 11th March, 1613, and endorsed with Shakespeare's signature, was up to the last century in the hands of an attorney, who gave it to

Garrick, who lost it. Garrick lost likewise (it is Miss Violetti, his wife, who tells the story), Forbes's manuscript, with his letters in Latin. From 1613 Shakespeare remained at his house at New Place, occupied with his garden, forgetting his plays, wrapped up in his flowers. He planted in this garden of New Place the first mulberry-tree that was grown at Stratford, just as Queen Elizabeth wore, in 1561, the first silk stockings seen in England. On the 25th March, 1616, feeling ill, he made his will. His will, dictated by him, is written on three pages; he signed each of them; his hand trembled. On the first page he signed only his Christian name, "William;" on the second, "Willm. Shaspr.;" on the third, "William Shasp." On the 23rd April, he died. He had reached that day exactly fifty-two years, being born on the 23rd April, 1564. On that same day, 23rd April, 1616, died Cervantes, a genius of like growth. When Shakespeare died, Milton was eight years, Corneille ten years of age, Charles I. and Cromwell were two youths, the one sixteen, the other seventeen years old.

CHAPTER IV.

SHAKESPEARE's life was greatly embittered. He lived perpetually slighted; he states it himself. Posterity may read this to-day in his own verses:—

> "Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
> And almost thence my nature is subdu'd.
> Pity me, then,
> Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink
> Potions of eysel."—*Sonnet* 111.

> "Your love and pity doth th' impression fill
> Which vulgar scandal stamp'd upon my brow."
> *Sonnet* 112.

> "Nor thou with public kindness honour me,
> Unless thou take that honour from thy name."
> *Sonnet* 36.

> "Or on my frailty why are frailer spies."—*Sonnet* 121.

Shakespeare had permanently near him one envious person, Ben Jonson, an indifferent comic poet, whose *début* he assisted. Shakespeare was thirty-nine when Elizabeth died. This queen had not paid attention to him; she managed to reign forty-four years without seeing that Shakespeare was there. She is not the least qualified, historically, to be called the "protectress of arts and letters," &c. &c. The historians of the old school gave these certificates to all princes, whether they knew how to read or not.

Shakespeare, persecuted like Molière at a later date, sought, as Molière, to lean on the master. Shakespeare and Molière would in our days have had a loftier spirit. The master, it was Elizabeth, "king

Elizabeth," as the English called her. Shakespeare glorified Elizabeth: he called her the "virgin star," "star of the west," and "Diana"—a name of a goddess which pleased the queen—but in vain. The queen took no notice of it; less sensitive to the praises in which Shakespeare called her Diana than to the insults of Scipio Gentilis, who, taking the pretensions of Elizabeth on the bad side, called her "Hecate," and applied to her the ancient triple curse, "Mormo! Bombo! Gorgo!" As for James I., whom Henry IV. called Master James, he gave, as we have seen, the lease of the Globe to Shakespeare, but he willingly forbade the publication of his pieces. Some contemporaries, Dr. Symon Forman among others, so far took notice of Shakespeare as to make a note of the occupation of an evening passed at the performance of the "Merchant of Venice!" That was all which he knew of glory. Shakespeare, once dead, entered into oblivion.

From 1640 to 1660 the Puritans abolished art, and shut up the playhouses. All theatricals were under a funeral shroud. With Charles II. the drama revived without Shakespeare. The false taste of Louis XIV. had invaded England. Charles II. belonged rather to Versailles than London. He had as mistress a French girl, the Duchess of Portsmouth, and as an intimate friend the privy purse of the King of France. Clifford, his favourite, who never entered the parliament-house without spitting, said: "It is better for my master to be viceroy under a great monarch like Louis XIV. than the slave of five hundred insolent English subjects." These were not the days of the Republic—the time when Cromwell took the title of "Protector of England and France," and forced this same Louis XIV. to accept the title of "King of the French."

Under this restoration of the Stuarts, Shakespeare completed his eclipse. He was so thoroughly dead

that Davenant, possibly his son, re-composed his pieces. There was no longer any "Macbeth" but the "Macbeth" of Davenant. Dryden speaks of Shakespeare on one occasion in order to say that he is "out of date." Lord Shaftesbury calls him "a wit out of fashion." Dryden and Shaftesbury were two oracles. Dryden, a converted Catholic, had two sons, ushers in the Chamber of Clément XI., made tragedies worth putting into Latin verse, as Atterbury's hexameters prove, and he was the servant of that James II. who, before being king on his own account, had asked of his brother, Charles II., "Why don't you hang Milton?" The Earl of Shaftesbury, a friend of Locke, was the man who wrote an "Essay on Sprightliness in Important Conversations," and who, by the manner in which Chancellor Hyde helped his daughter to the wing of a chicken, divined that she was secretly married to the Duke of York.

These two men having condemned Shakespeare, the oracle had spoken. England, a country more obedient to conventional opinion than is generally believed, forgot Shakespeare. Some purchaser pulled down his house, New Place. A Rev. Dr. Cartrell cut down and burnt his mulberry-tree. At the commencement of the eighteenth century the eclipse was total. In 1707, one called Nahum Tate published a "King Lear," warning his readers "that he had borrowed the idea of it from a play which he had read by chance, the work of some nameless author." This "nameless author" was Shakespeare.

CHAPTER V.

In 1728 Voltaire imported from England to France the name of Will Shakespeare. Only in place of Will, he pronounced it *Gilles*.

Jeering began in France, and oblivion continued in England. What the Irishman Nahum Tate had done for "King Lear," others did for other pieces. "All's Well that Ends Well" had successively two arrangers, Pilon for the Haymarket, and Kemble for Drury Lane. Shakespeare existed no more, and counted no more. "Much Ado about Nothing" served likewise as a rough draught twice, for Davenant in 1673, for James Miller in 1737. "Cymbeline" was recast four times: under James II., at the Theatre Royal, by Thomas Dursey; in 1695 by Charles Marsh; in 1759 by W. Hawkins; in 1761 by Garrick. "Coriolanus" was recast four times: in 1682, for the Theatre Royal, by Tates; in 1720, for Drury Lane, by John Dennis; in 1755, for Covent Garden, by Thomas Sheridan; in 1801, for Drury Lane, by Kemble. "Timon of Athens" was recast four times: at the Duke's Theatre, in 1678, by Shadwell; in 1768, at the Theatre of Richmond Green, by James Love; in 1771, at Drury Lane, by Cumberland; in 1786, at Covent Garden, by Hull.

In the eighteenth century the persistent raillery of Voltaire ended in producing in England a certain waking up. Garrick, whilst correcting Shakespeare, played him, and acknowledged that it was Shakespeare that he played. They reprinted him at Glasgow. An imbecile, Malone, made commentaries on his plays, and, as a logical sequence, whitewashed his

tomb. There was on this tomb a little bust, of a doubtful resemblance, and moderate as a work of art; but, what made it a subject of reverence, contemporaneous with Shakespeare. It is after this bust that all the portraits of Shakespeare have been made that we now see. The bust was whitewashed. Malone, critic and whitewasher of Shakespeare, spread a coat of plaster on his face, of idiotic nonsense on his work.

BOOK II.

MEN OF GENIUS,

CHAPTER I.

GREAT Art, using this word in its arbitrary sense, is the region of Equals.

Before going farther, let us fix the value of this expression, Art, which often recurs in our writing.

We speak of Art as we speak of Nature; here are two terms of an almost unlimited signification. To pronounce the one or the other of these words, Nature, Art, is to make a conjuration, to extract from the depths the ideal, to draw aside one of the two grand curtains of a divine creation. God manifests himself to us in the first degree through the life of the universe, and in the second through the thought of man. The second manifestation is not less holy than the first. The first is named Nature, the second is named Art. Hence this reality: the poet is a priest.

There is here below a pontiff,—it is genius.

Sacerdos Magnus.

Art is the second branch of Nature.

Art is as natural as Nature.

By the word God—let us fix the sense of this word—we mean the Living Infinite.

The I latent of the Infinite patent, that is God.

God is the Invisible seen.

The world concentrated is God. God expanded, is the world.

We, who are speaking, we believe in nothing out of God.

That being said, let us proceed. God creates art by man. He has for a tool the human intellect. This tool, it is the workman who has made it for himself; he has no other.

Forbes, in the curious little work perused by Warburton and lost by Garrick, affirms that Shakespeare devoted himself to the practice of magic, that magic was in his family, and that what little good there was in his pieces was dictated to him by one "Alleur," a spirit.

Let us say on this, for we must not draw bad from any of the questions about to arise, that it is a wretched error of all ages to desire to give the human intellect assistance from without. *Antrum adjuvat vatem.* To the work which seems super-human, people wish to bring the intervention of the extra-human; in antiquity, the tripod; in our days, the table. The table is nothing but the tripod come back. To accept *au pied de la lettre* the demon that Socrates talks of, the thicket of Moses, the nymph of Numa, the spirit of Plotinus, and Mahomet's dove, is to be the victim of a metaphor.

On the other hand, the table, turning or talking, has been very much laughed at; to speak the truth, this raillery is out of place. To replace inquiry by mockery is convenient, but not very scientific. For our part, we think that the strict duty of science is to test all phenomena. Science is ignorant, and has no right to laugh; a savant who laughs at the possible is very near being an idiot. The unexpected ought always to be expected by science. Her duty is to stop it in its course and search it, rejecting the chimerical, establishing the real. Science has but the right to put a visa on facts; she should verify and

distinguish. All human knowledge is but picking and culling. Because the false mixes with the true, it is no excuse for rejecting the mass. When was the tare an excuse for refusing the corn? Hoe the weed, error, but reap the fact, and place it beside others. Knowledge is the sheaf of facts.

The mission of science—to study and try the depth of everything. All of us, according to our degree, are the creditors of investigation; we are its debtors also. It is owed to us, and we owe it to others. To avoid a phenomenon, to refuse to pay it that attention to which it has a right, to lead it out, to shut to the door, to turn our back on it laughing, is to make truth a bankrupt, and to leave the draft of science to be protested. The phenomenon of the tripod of old, and of the table of to-day, is entitled, like anything else, to observation. Psychic science will gain by it, without doubt. Let us add that, to abandon phenomena to credulity, is to commit treason against human reason.

Homer affirms that the tripods of Delphi walked of their own accord; and he explains the fact, Song xviii. of the "Iliad," by saying that Vulcan forged invisible wheels for them. The explanation does not much simplify the phenomenon. Plato relates that the statues of Dædalus gesticulated in the darkness, had a will of their own, and resisted their master; and that he was obliged to tie them up, so that they might not walk off. Strange dogs at the end of a chain! Fléchier mentions, at page 52 of his "Histoire de Théodose"—referring to the great conspiracy of the magicians of the fourth century against the emperor—a table-turning of which, perhaps, we shall speak elsewhere, in order to say what Fléchier did not say, and seemed to ignore. This table was covered with a round plating of several metals, *ex diversis metallicis materiis fabrefacta*, like the plates of copper and zinc actually employed in biology. So you may see that the phe-

nomenon, always rejected and always reappearing, is not a matter of yesterday.

Besides, whatever credulity has said or thought about it, this phenomenon of the tripods and tables is without any connexion, and it is the very thing we want to come to with the inspiration of the poets —an inspiration entirely direct. The sibyl has a tripod, the poet none. The poet is himself a tripod. He is a tripod of God. God has not made this marvellous distillery of thought, the brain of man, not to be made use of. Genius has all that it wants in its brain; every thought passes by there. Thought ascends and buds from the brain, as the fruit from the root. Thought is man's consequence; the root plunges into earth, the brain into God.

That is to say, into the Infinite.

Those who imagine (there are such, witness Forbes) that a poem like "Le Médecin de son Honneur," or "King Lear," can be dictated by a tripod or a table, err in a strange fashion; these works are the works of man. God has no need to make a piece of wood aid Shakespeare or Calderon.

Then let us dispose of the tripod. Poetry is the poet's own. Let us be respectful before the possible of which no one knows the limit. Let us be attentive and serious before the extra-human, out of which we come, and which awaits us; but let us not diminish the great workers of earth by hypotheses of mysterious assistance, which is not necessary; let us leave to the brain what belongs to it, and agree that the work of the men of genius is of the superhuman, the offspring of man.

CHAPTER II.

SUPREME Art is the region of Equals.

The *chef d'œuvre* is adequate to the *chef d'œuvre.*

As water, when heated to 100° C., is incapable of calorific increase, and can rise no higher, so human thought attains in certain men its maximum intensity. Æschylus, Job, Phidias, Isaiah, St. Paul, Juvenal, Dante, Michael Angelo, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Beethoven, with some others, mark the 100° of genius.

The human mind has a summit.

This summit is the Ideal.

God descends, man rises to it.

In each age three or four men of genius undertake the ascent. From below, the world follow them with their eyes. These men go up the mountain, enter into the clouds, disappear, reappear. People watch them, mark them. They walk by the side of precipices. A false step does not displease certain of the lookers-on. They daringly pursue their road. See them aloft, see them in the distance, they are but black specks. "How small they are!" says the crowd. They are giants. On they go. The road is uneven, its difficulties constant. At each step a wall, at each step a trap. As they rise, the cold increases. They must make their ladder, cut the ice, and walk on it, hewing the steps in haste. Every storm is raging. Nevertheless, they go forward in their madness. The air becomes difficult to breathe. The abyss increases around them. Some fall. It is well

done. Others stop and retrace their steps; there is sad weariness.

The bold ones continue; those predestined persist. The dreadful declivity sinks beneath them and tries to draw them in; glory is traitorous. They are eyed by the eagles; the lightning plays about them; the hurricane is furious. No matter, they persevere. They ascend. He who arrives at the summit is thy equal, Homer!

Those names that we have mentioned, and those which we might have added, repeat them again. To choose between these men is impossible. There is no method for striking the balance between Rembrandt and Michael Angelo.

And, to confine ourselves solely to the authors and poets, examine them one after the other. Which is the greatest? Every one.

1. One, Homer, is the huge poet-child. The world is born, Homer sings. He is the bird of this aurora. Homer has the holy sincerity of the early dawn. He almost ignores shadow. Chaos, heaven, earth, Geo and Ceto, Jove god of gods, Agamemnon king of kings, peoples, flocks from the beginning, temples, towns, battles, harvests, the ocean; Diomedes fighting, Ulysses wandering; the windings of a sail seeking its home; Cyclops, dwarfs; a map of the world crowned by the gods of Olympus, and here and there a glimmer of the furnace permitting a sight of hell, priests, virgins, mothers, little children frightened by the plumes, the dog who remembers, great words which fall from greybeards, friendships, loves, passions, and the hydras, Vulcan for the laugh of the gods, Thersites for the laugh of men; two aspects of married life summed up for the benefit of ages in Helen and Penelope; the Styx, Destiny, the heel of Achilles, without which Destiny would be vanquished by the Styx; monsters, heroes, men, thousands of landscapes seen in perspective in the cloud of the old world,—this immensity,

this is Homer. Troy coveted, Ithaca desired. Homer is war and travel, the two first methods for the meeting of mankind; the camp attacks the fortress, the ship sounds the unknown, which is also an attack; around war every passion; around travels every kind of adventure; two gigantic groups: the first, bloody, is called the "Iliad;" the second, luminous, is called the "Odyssey." Homer makes men greater than nature; they hurl at each other rocks which twelve pairs of oxen could not move; the gods hardly care to come in contact with them. Minerva takes Achilles by the hair; he turns round in anger—"What do you want with me, goddess?" No monotony in these puissant figures. These giants are graduated. After each hero, Homer breaks the mould. Ajax, son of Oïleus, is less high in stature than Ajax, son of Telamon. Homer is one of the men of genius who resolve that beautiful problem of art—the most beautiful of all, perhaps—the true picture of humanity obtained by aggrandizing man; that is to say, the creation of the real in the ideal. Fable and history, hypothesis and tradition, the chimera and knowledge, make up Homer. He is fathomless, and he is cheerful. All the depth of ancient days moves happily radiant and luminous in the vast azure of this spirit. Lycurgus, that peevish sage, half way between a Solon and a Draco, was conquered by Homer. He turned out of the way, whilst travelling, to go and read at the house of Cleophilus, Homer's poems, placed there in remembrance of the hospitality that Homer, it is said, had formerly received in that house. Homer, to the Greeks, was God; he had priests, the Homerides. Alcibiades gave a bombastic orator a cuff for boasting that he had never read Homer. The divinity of Homer has survived paganism. Michael Angelo said —"*When I read Homer, I look at myself to see if I am not twenty feet in height.*" Tradition will have it that the first verse of the "Iliad" should be a verse of

Orpheus, who, doubling Homer by Orpheus, increased in Greece the religion of Homer. The shield of Achilles, song xviii. of the "Iliad," was commented on in the temples by Damo, daughter of Pythagoras. Homer, as the sun, has planets. Virgil, who writes the "Æneid," Lucan, who writes "Pharsalia," Tasso, who writes "Jerusalem," Ariosto, who composes "Roland," Milton, who writes "Paradise Lost," Camoëns, who writes the "Lusiades," Klopstock, who wrote the "Messiah," Voltaire, who wrote the "Henriade," gravitate towards Homer; and, sending back to their own moons his light reflected in different degrees, move at unequal distances in his boundless orbit. This is Homer. Such is the beginning of the epic poem.

2. Another, Job, began the drama. This embryo is a colossus. Job begins the drama, and it is forty centuries ago, by placing Jehovah and Satan in presence of each other; the evil defies the good, and behold the action is begun. The earth is the place for the scene, and man the field of battle; the plagues are the actors. One of the wildest grandeurs of this poem is that in it the sun is inauspicious. The sun is in Job as in Homer, but it is no longer the dawn, it is midday. The mournful heaviness of the brazen ray falling perpendicularly on the desert pervades this poem, heated to a white heat. Job sweats on his dunghill. The shadow of Job is small and black, and hidden under him, as the snake under the rock. Tropical flies buzz on his sores. Job has above his head the frightful Arabian sun—a bringer-up of monsters, an amplifier of plagues, who changes the cat into the tiger, the lizard into the crocodile, the pig into the rhinoceros, the snake into the boa, the nettle into the cactus, the wind into the simoon, the miasma into the plague. Job is anterior to Moses. Far into ages, by the side of Abraham, the Hebrew patriarch, there is Job, the Arabian patriarch. Before being

proved. He had been happy. "*the greatest man in all the East*," says his poem. This was the labourer-king. He exercised the immense priesthood of solitude; he sacrificed and sanctified. Towards evening he gave the earth the blessing the "berne." He was learned. He knew rhythm. His poem, of which the Arabian text is lost, was written in verse: this, at least, is certain as regards from verse 3 of chap. iii. to the end. He was good. He did not meet a poor child without the wrong him the small coin kesitha; he was "the foot of the lame man, and the eye of the blind." It is from that that he was precipitated: fallen, he became gigantic. The whole poem of "Job" is the development of this idea, the greatness that may be found in the bottom of the abyss. Job is more majestic when undone than when prosperous. His leprosy is a purple cloth. His misery terrifies those who are there; they speak not to him until after a silence of seven days and seven nights. His lamentation is marked by they know not what quiet and sad surprise. As he is crushing the vermin on his ulcers, he calls on the stars. He addresses Orion, the Hyades, which he names the Pleiades, and the signs that are at noonday. He says, "God has put an end to darkness." He calls the diamond which is hidden "the stone of obscurity." He mixes with his distress the misfortune of others, and has tragic words that freeze—"the widow is desolate." He smiles also, and then more frightful yet. He has around him Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, three implacable types of the friendly busybody, of whom he says, "You play on me as on a tambourine." His language, submissive towards God, is bitter towards kings: "the kings of the earth build solitudes;" leaving our wit to find out whether he speaks of their tomb or their kingdom. Tacitus says, "solitudinem faciunt." As to Jehovah, he adores him; and under the furious scourging of the plagues, all his resistance is confined

to asking of God, "Wilt thou not permit me to swallow my spittle?" That dates four thousand years ago. At the same hour, perhaps, when the enigmatical astronomer of Denderah carves in the granite his mysterious zodiac, Job engraves his on human thought, and his zodiac is not made of stars, but of miseries. This zodiac turns yet above our heads. We have of Job only the Hebrew version, written by Moses. Such a poet, followed by such a translator, makes us dream! The man of the dunghill is translated by the man of Sinai. It is that, in reality, Job is a minister and a prophet. Job extracts from his drama a dogma. Job suffers, and draws an inference. Now, to suffer and draw an inference is to teach; sorrow, when logical, leads to God. Job teaches. Job, after having touched the summit of the drama, stirs up the depths of philosophy. He shows first that sublime madness of wisdom which, two thousand years later, by resignation making itself a sacrifice, will be the foolishness of the cross—stultitiam crucis. The dunghill of Job, transfigured, will become the Calvary of Jesus.

3. Another, Æschylus, enlightened by the unconscious divination of genius, without suspecting that he has behind him, in the east, the resignation of Job, completes it, unwittingly, by the revolt of Prometheus; so that the lesson may be complete, and that the human race, to whom Job has taught but duty, shall feel in Prometheus Right dawning. There is something ghastly in Æschylus from one end to the other; there is a vague outline of an extraordinary Medusa behind the figures in the foreground. Æschylus is magnificent and powerful; as though you saw him knitting his brows beyond the sun. He has two Cains, Eteocles and Polynices; Genesis has but one. His swarm of sea-monsters come and go in the dark sky, as a flock of driven birds. Æschylus has none of the known proportions. He is rough, abrupt, im

[illegible] something the way, almost [illegible] which resembles [illegible] by nymphs [illegible] of the motion of the Titans, [illegible] the empire cries, and [illegible] of the earth [illegible] attempt again [illegible] Jupiter. [illegible] something [illegible] If we had it all, [illegible] hundred-handed, [illegible] than Ulysses and a [illegible] than Troy. Hard is a rock, raging [illegible] of storms, torrents, and precipices [illegible] that in times you might [illegible] mountain. Coming later [illegible] he has the appearance of an elder [illegible]

[illegible] seems above humanity, as a [illegible] He is the great centre. [illegible] kind of nocturnal cloud, lightens [illegible] with images which suddenly empurple [illegible] this dark mind and makes us exclaim: "He gives light." Isaiah takes hand to hand [illegible] which in [illegible] makes its appearance [illegible] the [illegible] He cries "Silence!" at the noise of [illegible] of triumphs. The foam of his prophecy surges even in nature: he denounces Babylon to the mules and bats, promises Nineveh briars, Tyre ashes, Jerusalem night, fixes a date for the wrongdoers, warns the powers of their approaching end, assigns a day against idols, high citadels, the fleets of Tarsus, the cedars of Lebanon, the oaks of Basan. He is standing on the threshold of civilization, and he refuses to enter. He is a kind of mouthpiece of the desert speaking to multitudes, and claiming for quicksands, briars, and breezes, the place where towns are, because it is just; because the tyrant and the

slave, that is to say, pride and shame, exist wherever there are walled enclosures; because evil is there incarnate in man; because in solitude there is but the beast, whilst in the city there is the monster. That which Isaiah made a reproach of in his day—idolatry, pride, war, prostitution, ignorance—still exists. Isaiah is the eternal cotemporary of vices which turn valets, and crimes which exalt themselves into kings.

5. Another, Ezekiel, is the wild soothsayer. The genius of the cavern. Thought which the roar suits. But listen. This savage makes a prophecy to the world. Which? Progress. Nothing more astonishing. Ah! Isaiah overthrows? Very well! Ezekiel will reconstruct. Isaiah refuses civilization. Ezekiel accepts, but transforms it. Nature and humanity blend together in that softened howl which Ezekiel throws forth. The idea of duty is in Job; of right, in Æschylus. Ezekiel brings before us the resulting, third idea—the human race ameliorated, posterity more and more free. That posterity may be a rising instead of a setting star is man's consolation. Time present works for time to come. Work, then, and hope. Such is Ezekiel's cry. Ezekiel is in Chaldæa, and from Chaldæa he sees distinctly Judæa, as from oppression you may see liberty. He declares peace as others declare war. He prophesies harmony, goodness, sweetness, union, the blending of races, love. Notwithstanding, he is terrible. He is the austere benefactor. He is the universal kind-hearted grumbler at the human race. He scolds, he almost gnashes his teeth, and people fear and hate him. The men about are thorns to him. "I live among the briars," he says. He condemns himself to be a symbol, and makes in his person, become hideous, a sign of human misery and popular degradation. He is a kind of voluntary Job. In his town, in his house, he causes himself to be bound with cords and rests mute: behold the slave! In the public place he eats dung:

behold the courtier. This makes Voltaire burst into laughter, and causes our tears to flow. Ah! Ezekiel, so far does your devotion go. You render shame visible by horror; you compel ignominy to turn the head when recognising herself in the dirt; you show that to accept a man for master is to eat dung; you cause a shudder to the cowards who follow the prince, by putting into your stomach what they put into their souls; you preach deliverance by vomiting; be reverenced! This man, this being, this figure, this swine-prophet, is sublime. And the transfiguration that he announces he proves. How? By transfiguring himself. From this horrible and soiled lip comes forth the blaze of poetry. Never has grander language been spoken, never more extraordinary. "I saw the vision of God. A whirlwind comes from the north, and a great cloud, and a fire enfolding itself. I saw a chariot and a likeness of four animals. Above the creatures and the chariot was a space like a terrible crystal. The wheels of the chariot were made of eyes, and so high that they were dreadful. The noise of the wings of the four angels was as the noise of the All-Powerful, and when they stopped they lowered their wings. And I saw a likeness which was as fire, and which put forth a hand. And a voice said, 'The kings and the judges have in their souls gods of dung. I will take from their breasts the heart of stone, and I will give them a heart of flesh.' I went to them that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I remained there astonished among them seven days." And again. "There was a plain and dry bones, and I said, 'Bones, rise up,' and I looked, and there came nerves on these bones, and flesh on these nerves, and a skin above; but the spirit was not there. And I cried, 'Spirit, come from the four winds, breathe, so that these dead revive.' The spirit came. The breath entered into them, and they rose up, and it was an army, and it was a people. Then the voice said,

'You shall be one nation, you shall have no king or judge but me, and I will be the God who has one people, and you shall be the people who have one God.'" Is not everything there? Search for a higher formula, you will not find it. A free man under a sovereign God. This visionary eater of dung is a resuscitator. Ezekiel has mud on the lips and sun in the eyes. Among the Jews the reading of Ezekiel was dreaded. It was not permitted before the age of thirty years. Priests, disturbed, put a seal on this poet. People could not call him an impostor. His terror as a prophet was incontestable. He had evidently seen what he related. Thence his authority. His very enigmas made him an oracle. They could not tell which it was—these women sitting toward the north weeping for Tammuz. Impossible to divine what was the "hasmal," this metal which he pictured as in fusion in the furnace of the dream. But nothing was more clear than his vision of Progress. Ezekiel saw the quadruple man; man, ox, lion, and eagle: that is to say, the master of thought, the master of the field, the master of the desert, the master of the air. Nothing forgotten. It is posterity complete, from Aristotle to Christopher Columbus, from Triptolemus to Montgolfier. Later on, the Gospel also will become quadruple in the four Evangelists, making Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John subservient to man, the ox, the lion, and the eagle, and, remarkable fact, to symbolize progress will take the four faces of Ezekiel. At all events, Ezekiel, like Christ, calls himself the "Son of Man." Jesus often in his parables invokes and cites Ezekiel, and this kind of first Messiah paves the way for the second. There are in Ezekiel three constructions: man, in whom he places progress; the temple, where he puts a light that he calls glory; the city, where he puts God. He cries to the temple, no priests here, neither they, nor their kings, nor the carcases of their kings.

Ch. xiii. — [illegible] We cannot help thinking that this Ezekiel, a species of minimal hemagogue, would help [illegible] in the terrible swooning of St. Denis. As for the [illegible] he murmurs above in this mysterious name, [illegible] which signifies "the Eternal is there." Then he is silent and thoughtful in the darkness, [illegible] humanity; farther on, in the depth of the horizon, a summed increase of azure.

Another Lucretius, is that vast obscure thing, [illegible] Jupiter is in Homer, Jehovah is in Job; in Lucretius Pan appears. Such is Pan's greatness, that he has under him Destiny, which is above Jupiter. Lucretius has travelled and he has mused, which is another voyage. He has been at Athens; he has been in the haunts of philosophers; he has studied Greece and made out India. Democritus has made him dream on matter, and Anaximander on space. His dreams have become doctrine. Nothing is known of the incidents of his life. Like Pythagoras, he frequented the two mysterious schools on the Euphrates, Nehardia and Pombeditha, and he may have met there the Jewish doctors. He spelt the papyri of Sepphoris, which, at his time, was not yet transformed into Diocesarea. He lived with the pearl-fishers of the isle of Tylos. We may find in the Apocrypha traces of an ancient strange itinerary recommended, according to some, to the philosophers by Empedocles, the magician of Agrigentum, and, according to others, to the rabbis by the high-priest Eleazer, who corresponded with Ptolemy Philadelphus. This itinerary would have served at a later time as a standard for the travels of the Apostles. The traveller who followed this itinerary went through the five satrapies of the country of the Philistines, visited the people who charm serpents and suck poisonous sores—the Psylli; drank of the torrent Bosor, which marks the frontier of Arabia Deserta; then touched and handled the bronze *carcan*

of Andromeda, still sealed to the rock of Joppa; Balbec in Syria, Apamea, on the Orontes, where Nicanor nourished his elephants; the harbour of Eziongeber, where the vessels of Ophir, laden with gold, stopped; Segher, which produced white incense, preferred to that of Hadramauth; the two Syrtes, the mountain of Emerald Smaragdus; the Nasamones, who pillaged the shipwrecked; the black nation, Agysimba, Adribe, the town of crocodiles; Cynopolis, town of aloes; the wonderful cities of Comagena, Claudia, and Barsalium; perhaps even Tadmor, the town of Solomon;—such were the stages of this almost fabulous pilgrimage of the thinkers. This pilgrimage, Lucretius, did he make it? One cannot tell. His numerous travels are beyond doubt. He had seen so many men, that at the end they were all mixed up in his eye, and this multitude had become to him shadows. He is arrived at that excess of simplification of the universe which is almost its entire fading away. He has sounded until he feels the plummet float. He has questioned the vague spectres of Byblos; he has conversed with the severed tree of Chyteron, who is Juno-Thespia. Perhaps he has spoken in the reeds to Oannes, the man-fish of Chaldæa, who had two heads—at the top the head of a man, below the head of a hydra, and who, drinking chaos by his lower orifice, revomited it on the earth by his upper lip, in knowledge awful. Lucretius has this knowledge. Isaiah borders on the archangels, Lucretius on larvas. Lucretius twists the ancient veil of Isis, steeped in the waters of darkness, and expresses out of it sometimes in torrents, sometimes drop by drop, a sombre poetry. The boundless is in Lucretius. At times there passes a powerful spondaic verse almost terrible, and full of shadow—"*Circum se foliis ac frondibus involventes.*" Here and there a vast image is sketched in the forest—"*Tunc Venus in sylvis jungebat corpora amantum,*" and

the forest is nature. These verses are impossible with Virgil. Lucretius turns his back on humanity, and looks fixedly on the Enigma. Lucretius's spirit, working to the very deeps, is placed between this reality, the atom, and this impossibility, the vacuum; by turns attracted by these two precipices, religious when he contemplates the atom, sceptical when he sees the void; thence his two aspects, equally profound, whether he denies, whether he affirms. One day this traveller commits suicide. This is his last departure. He puts himself *en route* for Death. He departs to see. He has embarked successively on all the pinnaces, on the galley of Trevirium for Sanastrée in Macedonia; on the trireme of Carystus for Metapon in Greece; on the skiff of Cyllenus for the island of Samothrace; on the *Sandal* of Samothrace for Naxos, where is Bacchus; on the *eroscaph* of Naxos for Syria; on the vessel of Syria for Egypt, and on the ship of the Red Sea for India. It remains for him to make one voyage: he is curious about the dark country; he takes his passage on the coffin, and himself unfastening the mooring, pushes with foot into space this dark vessel that floats on the unknown wave.

7. Another, Juvenal, has everything in which Lucretius fails: passion, emotion, fever, tragic flame, passion for honesty, avenging sneer, personality, humanity. He dwells in a certain given point in creation, and he contents himself with it; finding there what may nourish and swell his heart with justice and anger. Lucretius is the universe, Juvenal the locality. And what a locality! Rome. Between the two they are the double voice which speaks to land and town—*urbi et orbi.* Juvenal has, above the Roman Empire, the enormous flapping of wings of the griffon above the rest of the reptiles. He pounces upon this swarm and takes them, one after the other, in his terrible beak—from the adder who is Emperor and calls himself "Nero," to the earthworm who is a bad poet and

calls himself "Codrus." Isaiah and Juvenal have each their harlot; but there is something more gloomy than the shadow of Babel—it is the crashing of the bed of the Cæsars, and Babylon is less formidable than Messalina. Juvenal is the ancient free spirit of the dead republics; in him there is a Rome, in the bronze of which Athens and Sparta are cast. Thence in his poetry something of Aristophanes and something of Lycurgus. Take care of him; he is severe. Not a cord is wanting to his lyre or to the lash he uses. He is lofty, rigid, austere, thundering, violent, grave, just, inexhaustible in imagery, harshly gracious when he chooses. His cynicism is the indignation of modesty. His grace, thoroughly independent and a true figure of liberty, has talons; it appears all at once, enlivening, by we cannot tell what supple and spirited undulations, the well-formed majesty of his hexameter. You may imagine that you see the Cat of Corinth roaming on the frieze of the Parthenon. There is the epic in this satire; that which Juvenal has in his hand is the sceptre of gold with which Ulysses beat Thersites. "Bombast, declamation, exaggeration, hyperbole," cry the slaughtered deformities, and these cries stupidly repeated by rhetoricians, are a noise of glory. "Crime is quite equal to committing things or relating them," say Tillemont, Marc Muret, Garasse, &c.—fools, who, like Muret, are sometimes knaves. Juvenal's invective blazes since two thousand years ago, a fearful flash of poetry which still burns Rome in the presence of centuries. This splendid fire breaks out and, far from diminishing with time, increases under the whirl of its mournful smoke; from it proceed rays in behalf of liberty, probity, heroism; and it may be said that it throws even into our civilization minds full of his light. What is Régnier? What D'Aubigné? What Corneille?—Scintillations of Juvenal.

8. Another, Tacitus, is the historian. Liberty is

incarnate in him as in Juvenal, and rises, dead, to the judgment-seat, having for a toga its winding-shroud, and summons to his bar tyrants. The soul of a people become the soul of man, is Juvenal; we have just said so: thus it is with Tacitus. By the side of the poet who condemns stands the historian who punishes. Tacitus, seated on the curule chair of genius, summons and seizes *in flagrante delicto* these guilty ones, the Cæsars. The Roman Empire is a long crime. This crime commences by four demons, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero. Tiberius, the Emperor's spy; the eye which watches the world; the first dictator who dared to twist for himself the law of power made for the Roman people; knowing Greek, intellectual, sagacious, sarcastic, eloquent, terrible; loved by informers; the murderer of citizens, of knights, of the senate, of his wife, of his family; having rather the air of stabbing people than massacring them; humble before the barbarians; a traitor with Archelaus, a coward with Artabanes; having two thrones—Rome for his ferocity, Caprea for his baseness; an inventor of vices and names for vices; an old man with a seraglio of children; gaunt, bald, crooked, bandy-legged, sour-smelling, eaten up with leprosy, covered with suppurations, masked with plasters, crowned with laurels; having ulcers like Job, and the sceptre as well; surrounded by an oppressive silence; seeking a successor, smelling-out Caligula and finding him good; a viper who selects a tiger. Caligula, the man who has known fear, the slave become master, trembling under Tiberius, terrible after Tiberius, vomiting his fright of yesterday in atrocity. Nothing comes up to this mad fool. An executioner makes a mistake and kills, instead of the condemned one, an innocent man; Caligula smiles, and says "The condemned had not more deserved it." He gets a woman eaten alive by dogs, for the sake of seeing it. He lies publicly with his three sisters

stark naked. One of them dies, Drusilla; he says, "Behead those who do not bewail her, for she is my sister; and crucify those who bewail her, for she is a goddess." He makes his horse a pontiff, as, later on, Nero made his monkey god. He offers to the universe this wretched spectacle: the annihilation of intellect by power. Prostitute, sharper, a robber, breaking the busts of Homer and Virgil, his head dressed as Apollo with rays and booted with wings like Mercury; franticly master of the world, desiring incest with his mother, a plague to his empire, famine to his people, rout to his army, resemblance to the gods, and one sole head to the human race that he might cut it off,—such is Caius Caligula. He forces the son to assist at the torment of his father, and the husband the violation of his wife, and to laugh. Claudius is a mere sketch of a ruler. He is nearly a man made a tyrant, a noddle-head crowned. He hides himself; they discover him, they drag him from his hole, and they throw him terrified on the throne. Emperor, he still trembles, having the crown but not sure that he has his head. He feels for his head at times, as if he searched for it. Then he gets more confident, and decrees three new letters to be added to the alphabet. He is a learned man, this idiot. They strangle a senator. He says—"I did not order it, but since it is done it is well." His wife prostitutes herself before him. He looks at her, and says—"Who is this woman?" He scarcely exists: he is a shadow; but this shadow crushes the world. At length the hour for his departure arrives; his wife poisons him; his doctor finishes him. He says—"I am saved," and dies. After his death they come to see his corpse. Whilst alive they had seen his ghost. Nero is the most formidable figure of *ennui* that has ever appeared among men. The yawning monster that the ancients called Livor and the moderns call Spleen, gives us this enigma

to divine—Nero. Nero seeks simply a distraction. Poet, comedian, singer, coachman, exhausting ferocity to find voluptuousness, trying a change of sex, the husband of the eunuch Sporus, and bride of the slave Pythagoras, and promenading the streets of Rome between his husband and wife. Having two pleasures—one to see the people clutching pieces of gold, diamonds and pearls, and the other to see the lions clutch the people; an incendiary for curiosity's sake, and a parricide for want of employment. It is to these four that Tacitus dedicates his four first pillories. He hangs their reign to their necks: he fastens that *carcan* to theirs. His book of *Caligula* is lost. Nothing easier to comprehend than the loss and obliteration of these kinds of books. To read them was a crime. A man having been caught reading the history of Caligula by Suetonius, Commodus had him thrown to the wild beasts. "*Feris objici jussit,*" says Lampridius. The horror of those days is wonderful. Manners, below and above stairs, are ferocious. You may judge of the cruelty of the Romans by the atrocity of the Gauls. A row breaks out in Gaul: the peasants place the Roman ladies, naked and still alive, on harrows whose points enter here and there into the body; then they cut their breasts from them and sew them in their mouths, as though they had the appearance of eating them. *Vix vindicta est,* "these are scarcely reprisals," says the Roman general, Turpilianus. These Roman ladies had the practice, whilst chattering with their lovers, of sticking pins of gold in the breasts of their Persian or Gallic slaves who dressed their hair. Such is the humanity at which Tacitus is present. This view renders him terrible. He states the facts, and leaves you to draw your conclusions. You only meet a Potiphar in Rome. When Agrippina, reduced to her last resource, seeing her grave in the eyes of her son, offers him her bed, when her lips seek those of Nero, Tacitus is there, following

her with his eyes, *lasciva oscula et prænuntias flagitii blanditias;* and he denounces to the world this effort of a monstrous and trembling mother to make the parricide miscarry by incest. Whatever Justus Lipsius, who bequeathed his pen to the Holy Virgin, has said, Domitian exiled Tacitus and did well. Men like Tacitus are unhealthy subjects for authority. Tacitus applies his style to the shoulder of an emperor, and the mark remains. Tacitus always makes his thrust at the required spot. A deep thrust. Juvenal, all-powerful poet, deals about him, scatters, makes a show, falls and rebounds, strikes right and left, a hundred blows at a time, on laws, manners, bad magistrates, corrupt verses, libertines and the idle, on Cæsar, on the people, everywhere; he is lavish, like hail; he is careless, like the whip. Tacitus has the conciseness of red iron.

9. Another, John, is the virgin old man. All the ardent sap of man, become smoke and mysterious shaking, is in his head, as a vision. One does not escape love. Love, unsatiated and discontented, changes itself at the end of life into a gloomy overflowing of chimeras. The woman wants man; otherwise man, instead of human, will have a phantom poetry. Some beings, however, resist universal procreation, and then they are in that peculiar state where monstrous inspiration can weaken itself on them. The Apocalypse is the almost mad *chef-d'œuvre* of this wonderful chastity. John, whilst young, was pleasant and wild. He loved Jesus; then could love nothing else. There is a deep resemblance between the Canticle of Canticles and the Apocalypse: the one and the other are explosions of pent-up virginity. The heart, mighty volcano, bursts open; there proceeds from it this dove, the Canticle of Canticles, or this dragon, the Apocalypse. These two poems are the two poles of ecstasy; voluptuousness and horror; the two extreme limits of the soul are attained; in

the first poem ecstasy exhausts love; in the second, terrifies it and carries to mankind, henceforth for ever disquieted, the dreadful fright of the eternal precipice. Another resemblance, not less worthy of attention, there is between John and Daniel. The nearly invisible thread of affinity is carefully followed by the eye of those who see in the prophetic spirit a human and normal phenomenon, and who, far from disdaining the question of miracles, generalize it and calmly attach it to existing phenomena. Religions lose, and science gains, by it. It has not been sufficiently remarked that the seventh chapter of Daniel contains the root of the Apocalypse. Empires are there represented as beasts. Therefore has the legend associated the two poets; it makes the one traverse the den of lions, and the other the caldron of boiling oil. Independently of the legend, the life of John is fine. An exemplary life which undergoes strange openings, passing from Golgotha to Patmos, and from the execution of Messiah to the exile of the prophet. John, after having been present at the sufferings of Christ, finished by suffering on his own account; the suffering seen made him an apostle, the suffering endured made him a magician; the growth of the spirit was the result of the growth of the trial. Bishop, he writes the Gospel. Proscribed, he composes the Apocalypse. Tragic work, written under the dictation of an eagle, the poet having above his head we know not what mournful flapping of wings. The whole Bible is between two visionaries, Moses and John. This poem of poems merges out of chaos in Genesis, and finishes in the Apocalypse by thunders. John was one of the great vagrants of the language of fire. During the Last Supper his head was on the breast of Jesus, and he could say, "My ear has heard the beating of God's heart." He went to relate it to men. He spoke a barbarous Greek, mixed with Hebrew expressions and Syrian words, harsh and grating, yet

charming. He went to Ephesus, he went to Media, he went among the Parthians. He dared to enter Ctesiphon, a town of the Parthians, built as a counterpoise to Babylon. He faced the living idol, Cobaris, king, god and man, for ever immovable on his block, which serves him as throne and latrine. He evangelized Persia, which the Gospel calls Paras. When he appeared at the Council of Jerusalem, they thought they saw a pillar of the Church. He looked with stupefaction at Cerintus and Ebion, who said that Jesus was but a man. When they questioned him on the mystery, he answered, "Love you one another?" He died at the age of ninety-four years, under Trajan. According to tradition, he is not dead; he is spared, and John is ever living at Patmos as Barberousse at Kaiserslautern. There are some waiting-caverns for these mysterious everlasting beings. John, as an historian, has his equals—Matthew, Luke, Mark; as a visionary he is alone. There is no dream approaches his, so deep it is in the infinite. His metaphors pass out from eternity, distracted; his poetry has a profound smile of madness; the reverberation of the Most High is in the eye of this man. It is the sublime going fully astray. Men do not understand it—scorn it and laugh. "My dear Thiriot," says Voltaire, "the Apocalypse is filth." Religions, being in want of this book, have taken to worshipping it; but, in order not to be thrown to the common sewer, it must be put on the altar. What does it matter? John is a spirit. It is in the John of Patmos, among all, that the communication between certain men of genius and the abyss is apparent. In all other poets men get a glimpse of this communication; in John they see it, at times they touch it, and have a shivering fit in placing, so to speak, the hand on this sombre door. That is the way to the Deity. It seems, when you read the poem of Patmos, that some one pushes you from behind; you have a confused

outline of the dreadful opening. It fills you with terror and attraction. If John had only that, he would be immense.

10. Another, Paul, a saint for the Church, a great man for humanity, represents this prodigy at the same time human and divine, Conversion. He is the one who has had a glimpse of the future. It leaves him haggard; and nothing can be more magnificent than this face, for ever wondering, of the man conquered by the light. Paul, born a Pharisee, had been a weaver of camel's-hair for tents, and servant of one of the judges of Jesus Christ, Gamaliel; then the scribes had advanced him, trusting to his natural ferocity. He was the man of the past, he had taken care of the mantles of the stone-throwers; he aspired, having studied with the priests, to become an executioner; he was on the road for this. All at once a wave of light emanates from the darkness, throws him down from his horse, and henceforth there will be in the history of the human race this wonderful thing—the road to Damascus. That day of the metamorphosis of St. Paul is a great day; keep the date,—it corresponds to the 25th January in our Gregorian calendar. The road to Damascus is necessary to the march of Progress. To fall into the truth and to rise a just man, a fall and transfiguration, that is sublime. It is the history of St. Paul. From his day, it will be the history of humanity. The flash of light is beyond the flash of lightning. Progress will carry itself on by a series of scintillations. As for St. Paul, who has been turned aside by the force of new conviction, this harsh stroke from on high opens to him genius. Once on his feet again, behold him proceed: he will no more stop. "Forward" is his cry. He is a cosmopolite. He loves the outsiders, whom Paganism calls barbarians, and Christianity calls Gentiles; he devotes himself to them. He is the apostle of the outer world. He writes to the nations epistles

on behalf of God. Listen to him speaking to the Galatians—"O insane Galatians! how can you go back to the yokes to which you were tied? There are no more Jews, or Greeks, or slaves. Do not carry out your grand ceremonies ordained by your laws. I declare unto you that all that is nothing. Love each other. Man must be a new creature. Freedom is awaiting you." There were at Athens, on the hill of Mars, steps hewn in rock, which may be seen to this day. On these steps sat the great judges before whom Orestes had appeared. There Socrates had been judged. Paul went there; and there, at night (the Areopagus only sat at night), he said to the grave men, "I come to announce to you the unknown God." The Epistles of Paul to the Gentiles are simple and profound, with the subtlety so marked in its influence over savages. There are in these messages gleams of hallucination; Paul speaks of the Celestials as if he distinctly saw them. Like John, half-way between life and eternity, it seems that he had one part of his thought on the earth and one in the Unknown; and it may be said, at moments, that one of his verses answers to another from beyond the dark wall of the tomb. This half-possession of death gives him a personal certainty, and one often distinctly apart from the dogma, and a mark of conviction on his personal conceptions, which makes him almost heretical. His humility, bordering on the mysterious, is lofty. Peter says, "The words of Paul may be taken in a bad sense." The deacon Hilaire and the Luciferians ascribe their schism to the Epistles of Paul. Paul is at heart so anti-monarchical that King James I., very much encouraged by the orthodox University of Oxford, caused the Epistle to the Romans to be burnt by the hand of the common hangman. It is true it was one with a commentary by David Pareus. Many of Paul's works are rejected by the Church: they are the finish; and among them his epistle to the Laodiceans, and above all his Apoca-

lypse, erased by the Council of Rome under Gelasius. It would be curious to compare it with the Apocalypse of John. On the opening that Paul had made to heaven the Church wrote "Entrance forbidden." He is not less holy for it. It is his official consolation. Paul has the restlessness of the thinker; text and formulary are little for him; the letter does not suffice; the letter, it is matter. Like all men of progress, he speaks with reserve of the written law; he prefers grace, as we prefer justice. What is grace? It is the inspiration from on high, it is the breath, *flat ubi vult;* it is liberty—Grace is the spirit of law. This discovery of the spirit of law belongs to St. Paul; and what he calls grace from a heavenly point of view, we, from an earthly point, call right. Such is Paul. The greatness of a spirit by the irruption of clearness, the beauty of violence done by truth to one spirit, breaks forth in this man. There it is, we insist, that lies the virtue of the road to Damascus. Henceforth, whoever wishes this increase must follow the guide-post of St. Paul. All those to whom justice shall reveal itself, every blindness desirous of the day, all the cataracts looking to be healed, all searchers after conviction, all the great adventurers after virtue, all the holders of good in quest of truth, shall go by this road. The light that they find there shall change nature, for the light is always relative to darkness; it shall increase in intensity; after having been revelation, it shall be rationalism; but it shall always be light. Voltaire is like St. Paul on the road to Damascus. The road to Damascus shall be for ever the passage for great minds. It shall also be the passage for peoples. For peoples, these vast individualisms, have like each of us their crisis and their hour; Paul, after his glorious fall, rose up again armed, against ancient errors, with that flaming sword, Christianity; and two thousand years after, France, struck by the light, arouses herself, she also holding in hand this sword of fire, the Revolution.

11. Another, Dante, has mentally conceived the abyss. He has made the epic poem of spectres. He rends the earth; in the terrible hole he has made he puts Satan. Then he pushes her through purgatory up to heaven. Where all end Dante begins. Dante is beyond man; beyond, not without. A singular proposition, which, however, has nothing contradictory in it, the soul being a prolongation of man into the indefinite. Dante twists light and shade into a huge spiral; it descends, then it ascends. Wonderful architecture! At the threshold is the sacred mist; across the entrance is stretched the corpse of hope; all that you perceive beyond is night. The infinite anguish is sobbing somewhere in the invisible darkness. You lean over this gulf-poem—is it a crater? You hear reports; the verse shoots out narrow and livid, as from the fissures of a solfatara; it is vapour now, then lava. This paleness speaks; and then you know that the volcano, of which you have caught a glimpse, is Hell. This is no longer the human medium; you are in the unknown abyss. In this poem the imponderable submits to the laws of the ponderable, with which it is mixed, as, in the sudden tumbling down of a building on fire, the smoke, carried down by the ruins, falls and rolls with them, and seems caught under the timber and the stones; thence strange effects; the ideas seem to suffer and to be punished in men. The idea, sufficiently man to undergo expiation, is the phantom—a form that is shade—impalpable, but not invisible, an appearance retaining yet a sufficient amount of reality for the chastisement to have a hold on it; sin in the abstract state, but having kept the human figure. It is not only the wicked who grieves in this Apocalypse, it is the evil; there all possible bad actions are in despair. This spiritualization of pain gives to the poem a powerful moral import. The depth of hell once sounded, Dante pierces it, and remounts to the other side of the infinite. In rising, he becomes idealized,

and thought drops the body as a robe. From Virgil he passes to Beatrice; his guide to hell, it is the poet; his guide to heaven, it is poetry. The epic poem continues, and has more grandeur yet; but man comprehends it no more. Purgatory and Paradise are not less extraordinary than Gehenna, but the more he ascends the less interested is man. He was somewhat at home in hell, but he is no longer so in heaven. He cannot recognise himself in angels; the human eye is perhaps not made for so much sun; and when the poem draws happiness, it becomes tedious. It is generally the case with all happiness. Marry the lovers, or send the souls to dwell in Paradise, it is well; but seek the drama elsewhere than there. After all, what does it matter to Dante if you no longer follow him! he goes on without you. He goes alone, this lion. His work is a wonder. What a philosopher is this visionary! what a sage is this madman! Dante lays down the law for Montesquieu; the penal divisions of *l'Esprit des Lois* are an exact copy of the classifications in the hell of the "Divina Commedia." That which Juvenal does for the Rome of the Cæsars, Dante does it for the Rome of Popes; but Dante is a more terrible judge than Juvenal. Juvenal whips with cutting thongs; Dante scourges with flames. Juvenal condemns; Dante damns. Woe to the living on whom this awful traveller fixes the unfathomable glare of his eyes!

12. Another, Rabelais, is the soul of Gaul; and who says Gaul says also Greece, for the Attic salt and the Gallic jest have at bottom the same flavour; and if anything, buildings apart, resembles the Piræus, it is "*La Rapée.*" Aristophanes is distanced; Aristophanes is wicked. Rabelais is good—Rabelais would have defended Socrates. In the order of lofty genius, Rabelais chronologically follows Dante; after the stern face, the sneering visage. Rabelais is the wondrous mask of ancient comedy detached from the

Greek proscenium, from bronze made flesh, henceforth a human living face, remaining enormous, and coming among us to laugh at us, and with us. Dante and Rabelais spring from the school of the Franciscan friars, as later Voltaire springs from the Jesuits; Dante the incarnate sorrow, Rabelais the parody, Voltaire the irony—they came from the Church against the Church. Every genius has his invention or his discovery: Rabelais has made this one, the belly. The serpent is in man, it is the intestines. It tempts, betrays, and punishes. Man, single being as a spirit and complex as man, has within himself for his earthly mission three centres—the brain, the heart, the stomach; each of these centres is august by one great function which is peculiar to it: the brain has thought, the heart has love, the belly has paternity and maternity. The belly may be tragic. "*Feri ventrem*," says Agrippina. Catherine Sforza, threatened with the death of her children, kept in hostage, exhibits herself naked to her navel on the battlements of the citadel of Rimini, and says to the enemy, "With this I can give birth to others." In one of the epic convulsions of Paris a woman of the people, standing on a barricade, raised her petticoat, showed the soldiery her naked belly, and cried, "Kill your mothers!" The soldiers perforated that belly with balls. The belly has its heroism; but it is from it that flows in life corruption, in art comedy. The breast where the heart rests has for its summit the head; the belly has the phallus. The belly being the centre of matter, is our gratification and our danger; it contains appetite, satiety, and putrefaction. The devotion, the tenderness, which take us then are subject to die; egotism replaces them. Easily do the affections become intestines. That the hymn can become a drunkard's brawl, that the strophe can be deformed into a couplet, is sad. That comes from the beast that is in man. The belly is essentially this

beast. Degradation seems to be its law. The ladder of sensual poetry has for its topmost round the Canticle of Canticles, and for its lowest the coarse jest. The belly god is Silenus; the belly emperor is Vitellius; the belly animal is the pig. One of those horrid Ptolemies was called the Belly, *Physcon.* The belly is to humanity a formidable weight; it breaks every moment the equilibrium between the soul and the body. It fills history. It is responsible for nearly all crimes. It is the bottle of all vices. It is the belly which by voluptuousness makes the sultan and by drunkenness the czar; it is this that shows Tarquin the bed of Lucrece; it is this that ends by making that senate which had waited for Brennus and dazzled Jugurtha deliberate on the sauce of a turbot. It is the belly which counsels the ruined libertine, Cæsar, the passage of the Rubicon. To pass the Rubicon, how well that pays one's debts! To pass the Rubicon, how readily that throws women into one's arms! What good dinners afterwards! And the Roman soldiers enter Rome with the cry, "*Urbani, claudite uxores; mœchum calvum adducimus.*" The appetite debauches the intellect. Voluptuousness replaces will. At starting, as is always the case, there is some nobleness. It is the orgy. There is a gradation between being fuddled and being dead drunk.

Then the orgy degenerates into bestial gluttony. Where there was Solomon there is Ramponneau. Man becomes a barrel; an inner sea of dark ideas drowns thought; conscience submerged cannot warn the drunken soul. Beastliness is consummated; it is not even any longer cynical, it is empty and beastly. Diogenes disappears; there remains but the barrel. We commence by Alcibiades, we finish by Trimalcion; it is complete; nothing more, neither dignity, nor shame, nor honour, nor virtue, nor wit—animal gratification in all its nakedness, thorough impurity. Thought dissolves itself in satiety; carnal gorging

absorbs everything; nothing survives of the grand sovereign creature inhabited by the soul; as the word goes, the belly eats the man. Such is the final state of all societies where the ideal is eclipsed. That passes for prosperity, and is called aggrandizing one's self. Sometimes even philosophers thoughtlessly aid this degradation by inserting in their doctrines the materialism which is in the consciences. This sinking of man to the level of the human beast is a great calamity. Its first fruit is the turpitude visible at the summit of all professions—the venal judge, the simoniacal priest, the hireling soldier—laws, manners, and beliefs are a dungheap—*totus homo fit excrementum.* In the sixteenth century, all the institutions of the past are in that state. Rabelais gets hold of that situation; he proves it; he authenticates that belly which is the world. Civilization is, then, but a mass, science is matter, religion is blessed with a stomach, feudality is digesting, royalty is obese. What is Henry VIII.? A paunch. Rome is a fat-gutted old woman; is it health? is it sickness? It is perhaps obesity, it is perhaps dropsy—query. Rabelais, doctor and priest, feels the pulse of papacy; he shakes his head and bursts out laughing. Is it because he has found life? No, it is because he has felt death; it is, in reality, breathing its last. Whilst Luther reforms, Rabelais jests. Which tends best to the end? Rabelais ridicules the monk, the bishop, the pope; laughter and death-rattle together; fool's bell sounding the tocsin! Well, then, what? I thought it was a feast—it is agony; one may be deceived by the nature of the hiccup. Let us laugh all the same; death is at the table; the last drop toasts the last sigh. The agony feasting—it is superb. The inner colon is king; all that old world feasts and bursts; and Rabelais enthrones a dynasty of bellies—Grangousier, Pantagruel, and Gargantua. Rabelais is the Æschylus of victuals; indeed, it is grand when we think that eating is

devouring. There is something of the gulf in the glutton. Eat then, my masters, and drink, and come to the finale. To live is a song, of which to die is the refrain. Others dig under the depraved human race fearful dungeons. For subterraneous caves the great Rabelais contents himself with the cellar. This universe, which Dante put into hell, Rabelais confines in a wine-cask; his book is nothing else. The seven circles of Alighieri bung and encompass this extraordinary tun. Look within the monstrous cask, and you see them there. In Rabelais they are entitled, Idleness, Pride, Envy, Avarice, Anger, Luxury, Gluttony; and it is thus that you suddenly meet again the formidable jester—where?—in church. The seven sins are this curé's sermon. Rabelais is priest. Castigation, properly understood, begins at home; it is therefore on the clergy that he strikes first; it is something, indeed, to be at home! The papacy dies of indigestion. Rabelais plays the papacy a trick, the trick of a Titan. The Pantagruelian joy is not less grandiose than the mirth of a Jupiter—jaw for jaw; the monarchical and priestly jaw eats; the Rabelaisian jaw laughs. Whoever has read Rabelais has for ever before his eyes this stern opposition—the mask of Theocritus gazed at fixedly by the mask of Comedy.

13. Another, Cervantes, is also a form of epic mockery; for as the writer of these lines said in 1827*, there are between the middle ages and the modern times, after the feudal barbarism, and placed there as it were for a conclusion, two Homeric buffoons, Rabelais and Cervantes. To sum up horror by laughter, is not the least terrible manner of doing it. It is what Rabelais did; it is what Cervantes did; but the raillery of Cervantes has nothing of the large Rabelaisian grin. It is the fine humour of the noble after the joviality of the curé. I am the Signor Don

* Preface to "Cromwell."

Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra, Caballeros, poet soldier, and, as a proof, one-armed. No broad, coarse jesting in Cervantes. Scarcely a flavour of elegant cynicism. The satirist is fine, sharp-edged, polished, delicate, almost gallant, and would even run the risk sometimes of diminishing his power with all his affected ways if he had not the deep poetic spirit of the Renaissance. That saves his charming grace from becoming prettiness. Like Jean Goujon, like Jean Cousin, like Germain Pilon, like Primatice, Cervantes has the chimera within himself. Thence all the unexpected marvels of his imagination. Add to that a wonderful intuition of the inmost deeds of the mind, and a philosophy, inexhaustible in aspects, which seems to possess a new and complete chart of the human heart. Cervantes sees the inner man. His philosophy blends with the comic and romantic instinct. Thence does the unexpected break in at each moment in his characters, in his action, in his style; the unforeseen, magnificent adventure. Personages remaining true to themselves, but facts and ideas whirling around them, with a perpetual renewing of the original idea, with the unceasing breathing of that wind which carries flashes of lightning, such is the law of great works. Cervantes is militant; he has a thesis, he makes a social book. Such poets are the fighting champions of the mind. Where have they learnt fighting? On the battle-field itself. Juvenal was a military tribune; Cervantes arrives from Lepanto, as Dante from Campalbino, as Æschylus from Salamis. After which they pass to a new trial. Æschylus goes into exile, Juvenal into exile, Dante into exile, Cervantes into prison. It is just, for they have served you well. Cervantes, as poet, has the three sovereign gifts; creation, which produces types, and clothes ideas with flesh and bone; invention, which hurls passions against events, makes man flash brightly over destiny, and brings forth the drama;

imagination, sun of the brain, which throws light and shade everywhere, and, giving relievo, creates life. Observation, which is acquired, and which, in consequence, is a quality rather than a gift, is included in creation. If the miser was not observed, Harpagon would not be created. In Cervantes, a new comer, glimpsed at in Rabelais, puts in a decided appearance; it is common sense. You have caught sight of it in Panurge, you see it plainly in Sancho Panza. It arrives like the Silenus of Plautus, and it may also say, "I am the god mounted on an ass." Wisdom at once, reason by-and-bye; it is indeed the strange history of the human mind. What more wise than all religions? What less reasonable? Morals true, dogmas false. Wisdom is in Homer and in Job; reason, such as it ought to be to overcome prejudices, that is to say, complete and armed cap-a-pie, will be found only in Voltaire. Common sense is not wisdom and is not reason; it is a little of one and a little of the other, with a dash of egotism. Cervantes makes it bestride ignorance, and, at the same time, completing his profound satire, he gives fatigue as a nag to heroism. Thus he shows one after the other, one with the other, the two profiles of man, and parodies them, without more pity for the sublime than for the grotesque. The hippogriff becomes Rosinante. Behind the equestrian figure, Cervantes creates and gives movement to the asinine personage. Enthusiasm takes the field, Irony follows in its footsteps. The wonderful feats of Don Quixote, his riding and spurring, his big lance, steady in the rest, are judged by the donkey, a connoisseur in windmills. The invention of Cervantes is so masterly that there is between the man type and the quadruped complement statuary adhesion, the reasoner like the adventurer is part of the beast which belongs to him, and you can no more dismount Sancho Panza than Don Quixote. The Ideal is in Cervantes as in

Dante; but it is called the impossible, and is scoffed at. Beatrix is become Dulcinea. To rail at the ideal would be the failing of Cervantes; but this failing is only apparent; look well, the smile has a tear; in reality Cervantes is for Don Quixote what Molière is for Alcestes. One must learn how to read in a peculiar manner in the books of the sixteenth century; there is in almost all, on account of the threats hanging over the liberty of thought, a secret that must be opened, and the key of which is often lost; Rabelais had something unexpressed, Cervantes had an aside, Machiavel had a secret recess, several perhaps; at all events, the advent of common sense is the great fact in Cervantes. Common sense is not a virtue; it is the eye of interest; it would have encouraged Themistocles and dissuaded Aristides; Leonidas has no common sense; Regulus has no common sense; but in the face of egotistical and ferocious monarchies dragging poor peoples into wars undertaken for themselves, decimating families, making mothers desolate, and driving men to kill each other with all those fine words—military honour, warlike glory, obedience to discipline &c., &c., it is an admirable personification, that common sense coming all at once and crying to the human race "Take care of your skin!"

14. Another, Shakespeare, what is he? You might almost answer, he is the earth. Lucretius is the sphere, Shakespeare is the globe. There is more and less in the globe than in the sphere. In the sphere there is the whole; on the globe there is man. Here the outer, there the inner mystery. Lucretius is the being, Shakespeare is the existence. Thence so much shadow in Lucretius; thence so much movement in Shakespeare. Space, *the blue*, as the Germans say, is certainly not forbidden to Shakespeare. The earth sees and surveys heaven; the earth knows heaven under its two aspects, darkness and azure, doubt and hope. Life goes and comes in death. All life is a

secret, a sort of enigmatical parenthesis between birth and the death-throe, between the eye which opens and the eye which closes. This secret, Shakespeare has its solicitude. Lucretius is; Shakespeare lives. In Shakespeare the birds sing, the bushes become verdant, the hearts love, the souls suffer, the cloud wanders, it is hot, it is cold, night falls, time passes, forests and crowds speak, the vast eternal dream hovers about. The sap and the blood, all forms of the fact multiple, the actions and the ideas, man and humanity, the living and the life, the solitudes, the cities, the religions, the diamonds and pearls, the dung-hills and the charnel-houses, the ebb and flow of beings, the steps of the comers and goers, all, all are on Shakespeare and in Shakespeare, and, this genius being the earth, the dead emerge from it. Certain sinister sides of Shakespeare are haunted by spectres. Shakespeare is a brother of Dante. The one completes the other. Dante incarnates all supernaturalism, Shakespeare all nature; and, as these two regions, nature and supernaturalism, which appear to us so different, are really the same unity, Dante and Shakespeare, however dissimilar, commingle outwardly, and are but one innately; there is something of the Alighieri, something of the ghost in Shakespeare. The skull passes from the hands of Dante into the hands of Shakespeare; Ugolino gnaws it, Hamlet questions it; and it shows perhaps even a deeper meaning and a loftier teaching in the second than in the first. Shakespeare shakes it and makes stars fall from it. The isle of Prospero, the forest of Ardennes, the heath of Armuyr, the platform of Elsinore, are not less illuminated than the seven circles of Dante's spiral by the sombre reverberation of hypothesis. The unknown, half fable, half truth, is outlined there as well as here. Shakespeare as much as Dante allows us to glimpse at the crepuscular horizon of conjecture. In the one as in the other there is the possible, that window of the dream opening

on reality. As for the real, we insist on it, Shakespeare overflows with it; everywhere the living flesh; Shakespeare possesses emotion, instinct, the true cry, the right tone, all the human multitude in his clamour. His poetry is himself, and at the same time it is you. Like Homer, Shakespeare is element. Men of genius, re-beginners—it is the right name for them—rise at all the decisive crises of humanity; they sum up the phases and complete the revolutions. In civilization, Homer stamps the end of Asia and the commencement of Europe; Shakespeare stamps the end of the Middle Ages. This closing of the Middle Ages, Rabelais and Cervantes have fixed also; but, being essentially satirists, they give but a partial aspect. Shakespeare's mind is a total—like Homer, Shakespeare is a cyclic man. These two geniuses, Homer and Shakespeare, close the two gates of barbarism, the ancient door and the gothic one. That was their mission; they have fulfilled it. That was their task; they have accomplished it. The third great human crisis is the French Revolution; it is the third huge gate of barbarism, the monarchical gate, which is closing at this moment. The nineteenth century hears it rolling on its hinges. Thence for poetry, the drama, and art arises the actual era, as independent of Shakespeare as of Homer.

CHAPTER III.

HOMER, Job, Æschylus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Lucretius, Juvenal, St. John, St. Paul, Tacitus, Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare.

That is the avenue of the immoveable giants of the human mind.

The men of genius are a dynasty. Indeed there is no other. They wear all the crowns, even that of thorns.

Each of them represents the sum total of absolute that man can realize.

We repeat it, to choose between these men, to prefer one to the other, to mark with the finger the first among these first, it cannot be. All are the Mind.

Perhaps, in an extreme case—and yet every objection would be legitimate—you might mark out as the highest summit among those summits, Homer, Æschylus, Job, Isaiah, Dante, and Shakespeare.

It is understood that we speak here only in an Art point of view, and in Art, in the literary point of view.

Two men in this group, Æschylus and Shakespeare, represent specially the drama.

Æschylus, a kind of genius out of time, worthy to stamp either a beginning or an end in humanity, does not seem to be placed in his right turn in the series; and, as we have said, seems an elder son of Homer's.

If we remember that Æschylus is nearly submerged by the darkness rising over human memory; if we remember that ninety of his plays have disappeared,

that of that sublime hundred there remains no more than seven dramas, which are also seven odes, we are stupefied by what we see of that genius, and almost frightened by what we do not see.

What was then Æschylus? What proportions and what forms had he in all this shadow? Æschylus is up to his shoulders in the ashes of ages; his head alone remains out of that burying, and, like the giant of the desert, with his head alone he is as immense as all the neighbouring gods standing on their pedestals.

Man passes before this unsubmergeable wreck. Enough remains for an immense glory. What the darkness has taken adds the unknown to this greatness. Buried and eternal, his brow projecting from the grave, Æschylus looks at generations.

CHAPTER IV.

To the eyes of the thinker, these men of genius occupy thrones in the ideal.

To the individual works that those men have left us, must be added various vast collective works, the *Vedas*, the *Râmayana*, the *Mahâbhârata*, the *Edda*, the *Niebelungen*, the *Heldenbuch*, the *Romancero*.

Some of these works are revealed and sacred. Unknown assistance is marked on them. The poems of India in particular have the ominous fulness of the possible imagined by insanity, or related by dreams. These works seem to have been composed in common with beings to whom our world is no longer accustomed. Legendary horror covers these epic poems. *These books have not been composed by man alone;* the Ash-Nagar inscription says it. Djinns have alighted upon them, polypterian magi have thought over them; the texts have been interlined by invisible hands, the demi-gods have been aided by demi-demons; the elephant, which India calls the sage, has been consulted. Thence a majesty almost horrible. The great enigmas are in these poems. They are full of mysterious Asia. Their prominent parts have the supernatural and hideous outline of chaos. They are a mass in the horizon like the Himalayas. The distance of the manners, beliefs, ideas, actions, persons, is extraordinary. One reads these poems with that wondering stoop of the head which is induced by the profound distance that there is between the book and the reader. This Holy Writ of Asia has evidently been yet more difficult to reduce and put into shape than

our own. It is in every part refractory to unity. In vain have the Brahmins, like our priests, erased and interpolated. Zoroaster is there, Ized Serosch is there. The Eschem of the Mazdæan traditions appears under the name of Siva, Manicheism is discernible between Brahma and Bouddha. All kinds of traces blend, cross, and recross each other in these poems. One may see in them the mysterious tramp of a crowd of minds who have worked at them in the mist of ages. Here the measureless toe of the giant; there the claw of the chimera. Those poems are the pyramid of a vanished colony of ants.

The Niebelungen, another pyramid of another anthill, has the same greatness. What the dives have done there, the elves have done here. These powerful epic legends, the testaments of ages, tattooings marked by races on history, have no other unity than the very unity of the people. The collective and the successive, combining together, are one. *Turba fit mens.* These recitals are mists, and wonderful flashes of light traverse them. As to the Romancero, which creates the Cid after Achilles, and the chivalric after the heroic, it is the Iliad of many lost Homers. Count Julian, King Roderigo, Cava, Bernard del Carpio, the bastard Mudarra, Nuño Salido, the Seven Infantes of Lara, the Connétable Alvar de Luna, no oriental or Hellenic type surpasses these figures. The horse of Campeador is equal to the dog of Ulysses. Between Priam and Lear you must place Don Arias, the old man of Zamora's tower, sacrificing his seven sons to his duty, and tearing them from his heart one after another. There is grandeur in that. In presence of these sublimities the reader undergoes a sort of insolation.

These works are anonymous, and, owing to the great reason of the "*Homo sum,*" whilst admiring them, whilst holding them as the summit of art, we prefer to them the acknowledged works. With equal

beauty, the Râmayana touches us less than Shakespeare. The "I" of a man is more vast and profound even than the "I" of a people.

However, these composite myriologies, the great testaments of India particularly, with a coat of poetry rather than real poems, expression at the same time sideral and bestial of humanities passed away, derive from their very deformity an indescribable supernatural air. The "I" multiple expressed by those myriologies makes them the polypi of poetry, vague and wonderful enormities. The strange joinings of the antediluvian rough outline seem visible there as in the ichthyosaurus or in the pterodactyle. Any one of these black *chefs-d'œuvre* with several heads makes on the horizon of art the silhouette of a hydra.

The Greek genius is not deceived by them, and abhors them. Apollo would attack them. The Romancero excepted, beyond and above all these collective and anonymous productions, there are men to represent peoples. These men we have just named. They give to nations and periods the human face. They are in art the incarnations of Greece, of Arabia, of India, of pagan Rome, of Christian Italy, of Spain, of France, of England. As for Germany, the matrix, like Asia, of races, hordes, and nations, she is represented in art by a sublime man, equal, although in a different category, to all those that we have characterized above. That man is Beethoven. Beethoven is the German soul.

What a shadow this Germany! She is the India of the West. She holds everything. There is no formation more colossal. In the sacred mist where the German spirit breathes, Isidro de Seville places theology; Albert the Great, scholasticism; Raban Maur, the science of language; Trithemius, astrology; Ottnit, chivalry; Reuchlin, vast curiosity; Tutilo, universality; Stadianus, method; Luther, inquiry; Albert Dürer, art; Leibnitz, science; Puffendorf, law; Kant,

philosophy; Fichte, metaphysics; Winckelmann, archæology; Herder, æsthetics; the Vossiuses, of whom one, Gerard John, was of the Palatinate, learning; Euler, the spirit of integration; Humboldt, the spirit of discovery; Niebuhr, history; Gottfried of Strasburg, fable; Hoffman, dreams; Hegel, doubt; Ancillon, obedience; Werner, fatalism; Schiller, enthusiasm; Goethe, indifference; Arminius, liberty.

Kepler gives Germany the heavenly bodies.

Gerard Groot, the founder of the "*Fratres Communis Vitæ,*" brings his first attempt at fraternity in the fourteenth century. Whatever may have been her infatuation for the indifference of Goethe, do not consider her impersonal, that Germany. She is a nation, and one of the most generous, for it is for her that Rückert, the military poet, forges the "geharnischte Sonnette," and she shudders when Körner hurls at her the Song of the Sword. She is the German fatherland, the great beloved land, "*Teutonia mater.*" Galgacus was to the Germans what Caractacus was to the Britons.

Germany has everything in herself and at home. She shares Charlemagne with France and Shakespeare with England. For the Saxon element is mingled with the British element. She has an Olympus, the Valhalla. She must have her own style of writing. Ulfilas, Bishop of Mœsia, composes it for her, and the Gothic mode of caligraphy will henceforth keep its ground along with the writing of Arabia. The capital letter of a missal strives to outdo in fancy the signature of a caliph. Like China, Germany has invented printing. Her Burgraves (this remark has been already made*) are to us what the Titans are to Æschylus. To the temple of Tanfana, destroyed by Germanicus, she caused the cathedral of Cologne to succeed. She is the grandmother of our history, the

* Preface of the Burgraves, 1843.

grandam of our legends. From all parts, from the Rhine to the Danube, from the Rauhe-Alp, from the ancient *Sylva Gabresa*, from the Lorraine on the Moselle, and from the ripuarian Lorraine by the Wigalois and the Wigamur, with Henry the Fowler, with Samo, King of the Vends, with the chronicler of Thuringia, Rothe, with the chronicler of Alsace, Twinger, with the chronicler of Limbourg, Gansbein, with all these ancient popular songsters, Jean Folz, Jean Viol, Muscatblüt, with the minnesaenger, those rhapsodists, the tale, that form of dream, reaches her and enters into her genius. At the same time, idioms are flowing from her. From her fissures rush, to the north, the Danish and Swedish, to the west, the Dutch and Flemish. The German idiom passes the channel and becomes the English language. In the order of intellectual facts, the German genius has other frontiers besides Germany. Such people resists Germany and yields to Germanism. The German spirit assimilates to itself the Greeks by Müller, the Servians by Gerhard, the Russians by Goëtre, the Magyars by Mailath. When Kepler, in the presence of Rudolph II., was preparing the Rudolphian Tables, it was with the aid of Tycho-Brahé. German affinities go far. Without any alteration in the local and national autonomies, it is with the great Germanic centre that the Scandinavian spirit in Oehlenschläger, and the Batavian spirit in Vondel, is connected. Poland unites herself to it, with all her glory, from Copernicus to Kosciusko, from Sobieski to Mickiewicz. Germany is the well of nations. They pass out of her like rivers; she receives them as a sea.

It seems as though one heard through all Europe the wonderful murmur of the Hercynian forest. The German nature, profound and subtle, distinct from European nature, but in harmony with it, volatilizes and floats above nations. The German mind is misty, luminous, scattered. It is a kind of immense soul

cloud, with stars. Perhaps the highest expression of Germany can only be given by music. Music, by its very want of precision, which, in this special case, is a quality, goes where the German soul proceeds.

If the German spirit had as much density as expansion, that is to say, as much will as power, she could, at a given moment, lift up and save the human race. Such as she is, she is sublime.

In poetry she has not said her last word. At this hour, the symptoms are excellent. Since the jubilee of the noble Schiller, particularly, there has been an awakening, and a generous awakening. The great definitive poet of Germany will be necessarily a poet of humanity, of enthusiasm, and of liberty. Perchance, and some signs give token of it, we may soon see him arise from the young group of cotemporary German writers.

Music, we beg indulgence for this word, is the vapour of art. It is to poetry what reverie is to thought, what the fluid is to the liquid, what the ocean of clouds is to the ocean of waves. If another description is required, it is the indefinite of this infinite. The same insufflation pushes it, carries it, raises it, upsets it, fills it with trouble and light and with an ineffable sound, saturates it with electricity and causes it to give suddenly discharges of thunder.

Music is the Verb of Germany. The German race, so much curbed as a people, so emancipated as thinkers, sing with a sombre love. To sing resembles a freeing from bondage. Music expresses that which cannot be said, and on which it is impossible to be silent. Therefore is Germany all music until she becomes all liberty. Luther's choral is somewhat a Marseillaise. Everywhere singing clubs and singing tables. In Suabia, every year the fête of song; on the banks of the Neckar, in the plains of Enslingen. The Liedermusik, of which Schubert's "Le Roi des Aulnes" is the *chef-d'œuvre*, is part of German life.

Song is for Germany a breathing. It is by singing that she respires and conspires. The note being the syllable of a kind of undefined universal language, Germany's grand communication with the human race is made through harmony, an admirable commencement to unity. It is by the clouds that the rains which fertilize the earth ascend from the sea; it is by music that the ideas which go deep into souls pass out of Germany.

Therefore we may say that Germany's greatest poets are her musicians, of which wonderful family Beethoven is the head.

Homer is the great Pelasgian; Æschylus, the great Hellene; Isaiah, the great Hebrew; Juvenal, the great Roman; Dante, the great Italian; Shakespeare, the great Englishman; Beethoven, the great German.

CHAPTER V.

THE EX- "Good Taste," that other divine law which has for so long a time weighed on Art, and which had succeeded in suppressing the Beautiful for the benefit of the Pretty, the ancient criticism, not altogether dead, like the ancient monarchy, prove, both from their own point of view, the same fault, exaggeration, in those sovereign men of genius whom we have named above. They are exaggerated.

This is caused by the quantity of the infinite that they have in them.

In fact, they are not circumscribed.

They contain something unknown. Every reproach that is addressed to them might be addressed to sphinxes. People reproach Homer for the carnage which fills his cavern, the "Iliad;" Æschylus, for his monstrousness; Job, Isaiah, Ezekiel, St. Paul, for double meanings; Rabelais, for obscene nudity and venomous ambiguity; Cervantes, for insidious laughter; Shakespeare, for his subtlety; Lucretius, Juvenal, Tacitus, for obscurity; John of Patmos and Dante Alighieri for darkness.

None of those reproaches can be made to other minds very great, but less great. Hesiod, Æsop, Sophocles, Euripides, Plato, Thucydides, Anacreon, Theocritus, Titus Livius, Sallust, Cicero, Terence, Virgil, Horace, Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto, La Fontaine, Beaumarchais, Voltaire, have neither exaggeration, nor darkness, nor obscurity, nor monstrousness. What, then, fails them? *That* which the others have—

That is the Unknown.

That is the Infinite.

If Corneille had "that," he would be the equal of Æschylus. If Milton had "that," he would be the equal of Homer. If Molière had "that," he would be the equal of Shakespeare.

It is the misfortune of Corneille that he mutilated and contracted the old native tragedy in obedience to fixed rules. It is the misfortune of Milton that by Puritan melancholy he excluded from his work the vast nature, the great Pan. It is Molière's failing that, out of dread of Boileau, he quickly extinguishes the luminous style of the "Etourdi"—that, for fear of the priests, he writes too few scenes like "The Poor" in "Don Juan."

To give no occasion for attack is a negative perfection. It is fine to be open to attack.

Indeed, dig out the meaning of those words, placed as masks to the mysterious qualities of geniuses. Under obscurity, subtlety, and darkness you find depth; under exaggeration, imagination; under monstrousness, grandeur.

Therefore, in the upper region of poetry and thought there are Homer, Job, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Lucretius, Juvenal, Tacitus, John of Patmos, Paul of Damascus, Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare.

These supreme men of genius are not a closed series. The author of ALL adds to it a name when the wants of progress require it.

BOOK III.

ART AND SCIENCE.

CHAPTER I.

MANY people, in our day, readily merchants and often lawyers, say and repeat, "Poetry is gone." It is almost as if they said, "There are no more roses; spring has breathed its last; the sun has lost the habit of rising; roam about all the fields of the earth, you will not find a butterfly; there is no more light in the moon, and the nightingale sings no more, the lion no longer roars, the eagle no longer soars, the Alps and the Pyrenees are gone, there are no more lovely girls or handsome young men, no one thinks any more of the graves, the mother no longer loves her child, heaven is quenched, the human heart is dead."

If it was permitted to mix the contingent with the eternal, it would be rather the contrary which would prove true. Never have the faculties of the human soul, investigated and enriched by the mysterious excavation of revolutions, been deeper and more lofty.

And wait a little, give time for the realization of the acme of social salvation, gratuitous and compulsory education; how long will it take? A quarter of a century, and then imagine the incalculable sum of intellectual development that this single word con-

tains: every one can read! The multiplication of readers is the multiplication of loaves. On the day when Christ created that symbol, he caught a glimpse of printing. His miracle is this marvel. Behold a book. I will nourish with it five thousand souls, a hundred thousand souls, a million souls—all humanity. In the action of Christ bringing forth the loaves, there is Gutenberg bringing forth books. One sower heralds the other.

What is the human race since the origin of centuries? A reader. For a long time he has spelt; he spells yet; soon he will read.

This infant, six thousand years old, has been at school. Where? In nature. At the beginning, having no other book, he spelt the universe. He has had his primary teaching of the clouds, of the firmament, of meteors, flowers, animals, forests, seasons, phenomena. The fisherman of Ionia studies the wave; the shepherd of Chaldæa spells the star. Then the first books came; sublime progress. The book is vaster yet than that grand scene, the world; for to the fact it adds the idea. If anything is greater than God seen in the sun, it is God seen in Homer.

The universe without the book is science taking its first steps; the universe with the book is the ideal making its appearance; therefore immediate modification in the human phenomenon. Where there had been only force, power reveals itself. The ideal applied to real facts is civilization. Poetry written and sung begins its work, magnificent and efficient deduction of the poetry only seen. A striking statement to make—science was dreaming, poetry acts. With the sound of the lyre, the thinker drives away brutality.

We shall return later on to this power of the book; we do not insist on it at present; that power blazes forth. Now, many writers, few readers; such has the world been up to this day. But a change is at hand.

Compulsory education is a recruiting of souls for light. Henceforth every progress of the human race will be accomplished by the literary legion. The diameter of the moral and ideal good corresponds always to the opening of intelligences. In proportion to the worth of the brain is the worth of the heart.

The book is the tool to work this transformation. A constant supply of light, that is what humanity requires. Reading is nutriment. Thence the importance of the school, everywhere adequate to civilization. The human race is at last on the point of stretching open the book. The immense human Bible, composed of all the prophets, of all the poets, of all the philosophers, is about to shine and blaze under the focus of this enormous luminous lens—compulsory education.

Humanity reading is humanity knowing.

What, then, is the meaning of that nonsense, poetry is gone! We might say, on the contrary, poetry is coming! For he who says poetry says philosophy and light. Now, the reign of the book commences; the school is its purveyor. Increase the reader, you increase the book. Not, certainly, in intrinsic value, it remains what it was, but in efficient power it influences where it had no influence; the souls become its subjects for good purpose. It was but beautiful; it is useful.

Who would venture to deny this? The circle of readers enlarging, the circle of books read will increase. Now, the want of reading being a train of powder, once lighted it will not stop; and this, combined with the simplification of hand-labour by machinery, and with the increased leisure of man, the body less fatigued leaving intelligence more free, vast appetites for thought will spring up in all brains, the insatiable thirst for knowledge and meditation will become more and more the human preoccupation; low places will be deserted for high places—a na-

tural ascent for every growing intelligence; people will quit Faublas to read "Orestes;" there they will taste greatness, and once they have tasted it, they will never be satiated; they will devour the beautiful because the refinement of minds augments in proportion to their force; and a day will come when the fulness of civilization making itself manifest, those summits, almost desert for ages, and haunted solely by the *élite*, Lucretius, Dante, Shakespeare, will be crowded with souls seeking their nourishment on the lofty peaks.

CHAPTER II.

THERE can be but one law; the unity of law results from the unity of essence; nature and art are the two sides of the same fact. And, in principle, saving the restriction which we shall indicate very shortly, the law of one is the law of the other. The angle of reflection equals the angle of incidence. All being equity in the moral order and equilibrium in the material order, all is equation in the intellectual order. The binomial theorem, that marvel fitting everything, is included in poetry not less than in algebra. Nature plus humanity, raised to the second power, gives art. That is the intellectual binomial theorem. Now replace this A + B by the number special to each great artist and each great poet, and you will have, in its multiple physiognomy and in its strict total, each of the creations of the human mind. What more beautiful than the variety of *chefs-d'œuvre* resulting from the unity of law. Poetry like science has an abstract root; science springs out of that, the *chef-d'œuvre* of metal, wood, fire, or air, machine, ship, locomotive, aeroscaph; poetry springs out of that, the *chef-d'œuvre* of flesh and blood, *Iliad, Canticle of Canticles, Romancero, Divine Comedy, Macbeth.* Nothing so starts and prolongs the shock felt by the thinker as those mysterious exfoliations of abstraction into realities in the double region, the one positive, the other infinite, of human thought. A region double, and nevertheless one; the infinite is a precision. The profound word Number is at the base of man's thought: it is, to our intelligence, elemental;

it has an harmonious as well as a mathematical signification. Number reveals itself to art by rhythm, which is the beating of the heart of the infinite. In rhythm, law of order, God is felt. A verse is a gathering like a crowd; its feet take the cadenced step of a legion. Without number, no science; without number, no poetry. The strophe, the epic poem, the drama, the riotous palpitation of man, the bursting forth of love, the irradiation of the imagination, all this cloud with its flashes, the passion, all is lorded over by the mysterious word Number, even as geometry and arithmetic. Ajax, Hector, Hecuba, the seven chiefs before Thebes, Œdipus, Ugolino, Messalina, Lear and Priam, Romeo, Desdemona, Richard III., Pantagruel, the Cid, Alcestes, all belong to it, as well as conic sections and the differential and integral calculus. It starts from two and two make four, and ascends to the region where the lightning sits.

Yet, between art and science, let us note a radical difference. Science may be brought to perfection; art, not.

Why?

CHAPTER III.

Among human things, and inasmuch as it is a human thing, art is a strange exception.

The beauty of everything here below lies in the power of reaching perfection. Everything is endowed with that property: to increase, to augment, to win strength, to march forward, to be worth more to-day than yesterday; that is at once glory and life. The beauty of art lies in not being susceptible of improvement.

Let us insist on these essential ideas, already touched on in some of the preceding pages.

A *chef-d'œuvre* exists once for all. The first poet who arrives, arrives at the summit. You will ascend after him, as high, not higher. Ah! you call yourself Dante, well; but that one calls himself Homer.

Progress, goal constantly displaced, halting-place for ever varying, has a shifting horizon. Not so with the ideal.

Now, progress is the motive power of science; the ideal is the generator of art.

Thus is explained why perfection is the characteristic of science, and not of art.

A savant may outlustre a savant; a poet never throws a poet into the shade.

Art progresses after its own fashion; it shifts its ground like science; but its successive creations, containing the immutable, live; whilst the admirable attempts of science, which are, and can be nothing but combinations of the contingent, obliterate each other.

The relative is in science; the positive is in art. The *chef-d'œuvre* of to-day will be the *chef-d'œuvre* of to-morrow. Does Shakespeare interfere in any way with Sophocles? Does Molière take anything from Plautus? Even when he borrows Amphitryon he does not take him from him. Does Figaro blot out Sancho Panza? Does Cordelia suppress Antigone? No. Poets do not climb over each other. The one is not the stepping-stone of the other. They rise up alone, without any other lever than themselves. They do not tread their equal under feet. Those who are first in the field respect the old ones. They succeed, they do not replace each other. The beautiful does not drive away the beautiful. Neither wolves nor *chefs-d'œuvre* devour each other.

Saint-Simon says (I quote from memory): "There has been through the whole winter but one cry of admiration for M. de Cambray's book, when suddenly appeared M. de Meaux's book, which devoured it." If Fénélon's book had been Saint-Simon's, the book of Bossuet would not have devoured it.

Shakespeare is not above Dante, Molière is not above Aristophanes, Calderon is not above Euripides, the Divine Comedy is not above Genesis, the Romancero is not above the Odyssey, Sirius is not above Arcturus. Sublimity is equality.

The human mind is the infinite possible. The *chefs-d'œuvre*, immense worlds, are hatched within it unceasingly, and last for ever. No pushing one against the other; no recoil. The occlusions, when there are any, are but apparent, and quickly cease. The expanse of the boundless admits all creations.

Art, taken as art, and in itself, goes neither forwards nor backwards. The transformations of poetry are but the undulations of the Beautiful, useful to human movement. Human movement, another side of the question, that we certainly do not overlook, and that we shall attentively examine farther on. Art is not

susceptible of intrinsic progress. From Phidias to Rembrandt there is onward movement, but not progress. The frescoes of the Sistine Chapel are absolutely nothing to the metopes of the Parthenon. Retrace your steps as much as you like, from the palace of Versailles to the castle of Heidelberg, from the castle of Heidelberg to Notre-Dame of Paris, from Notre-Dame of Paris to the Alhambra, from the Alhambra to St. Sophia, from St. Sophia to the Coliseum, from the Coliseum to the Propylæons, from the Propylæons to the Pyramids, you may recede into ages, you do not recede in art. The Pyramids and the Iliad stand on the fore plan.

Masterpieces have a level, the same for all, the absolute.

Once the absolute reached, all is said. That cannot be excelled. The eye can bear but a certain quantity of dazzling light.

Thence comes the assurance of poets. They lean on posterity with a lofty confidence. "*Exegi monumentum,*" says Horace. And on that occasion he insults bronze. "*Plaudite, cives,*" says Plautus. Corneille, at sixty-five years, wins the love (a tradition in the Escoubleau family) of the very young Marquise de Contades, by promising her to send her name down to posterity—

> "Chez cette race nouvelle,
> Où j'aurai quelque crédit,
> Vous ne passerez pour belle
> Qu'autant que je l'aurai dit."

In the poet and in the artist there is the infinite. It is this ingredient, the infinite, which gives to this kind of genius the irreducible grandeur.

This amount of the infinite, in art, is not inherent to progress. It may have, and it certainly has, duties to fulfil towards progress, but it is not dependent on it. It is dependent on no perfections which may

result from the future, on no transformation of language, on no death or birth of idioms. It has within itself the immeasurable and the innumerable; it cannot be subdued by any occurrence; it is as pure, as complete, as sidereal, as divine in the heart of barbarism as in the heart of civilization. It is the Beautiful, diverse according to the men of genius, but always equal to itself. Supreme.

Such is the law, scarcely known, of Art.

CHAPTER IV.

SCIENCE is different.

The relative, which governs it, leaves its mark on it; and these successive stamps of the relative, more and more resembling the real, constitute the movable certainty of man.

In science, certain things have been masterpieces which are so no more. The hydraulic machine of Marly was a *chef-d'œuvre.*

Science seeks perpetual movement. She has found it; it is itself perpetual motion.

Science is continually moving in the benefit it confers.

Everything stirs up in science, everything changes, everything is constantly renewed. Everything denies, destroys, creates, replaces everything. That which was accepted yesterday is put again under the millstone to-day. The colossal machine, Science, never rests. It is never satisfied; it is everlastingly thirsting for improvement, which the absolute ignores. Vaccination is a problem, the lightning-rod is a problem. Jenner may have erred, Franklin may have deceived himself; let us go on seeking. This agitation is grand. Science is restless around man; it has its own reasons for this restlessness. Science plays in progress the part of utility. Let us worship this magnificent servant.

Science makes discoveries, art composes works. Science is an acquirement of man, science is a ladder, one savant overtops the other. Poetry is a lofty soaring.

Do you want examples? They abound. Here is one, the first which occurs to our mind.

Jacob Metzu, scientifically Metius, discovers the telescope by chance, as Newton did gravitation and Christopher Columbus America. Let us open a parenthesis: there is no chance in the creation of "Orestes" or of "Paradise Lost." A *chef-d'œuvre* is the offspring of will. After Metzu comes Galileo, who improves the discovery of Metzu; then Kepler, who improves on the improvement of Galileo; then Descartes, who, although going somewhat astray in taking a concave glass for eye-piece instead of a convex one, fructifies the improvement of Kepler; then the Capuchin Reita, who rectifies the reversing of objects; then Huyghens, who makes a great step by placing the two convex glasses on the focus of the objective; and in less than fifty years, from 1610 to 1659, during the short interval which separates the "Nuncius Sidereus" of Galileo from the Oculus Eliæ and Enoch of Father Reita, behold the original inventor, Metzu, obliterated. And it is constantly the same in science.

Vegetius was Count of Constantinople, but that is no obstacle to his tactics being forgotten. Forgotten like the strategy of Polybius, forgotten like the strategy of Folard. The pig's-head of the phalanx and the pointed order of the legion have for a moment reappeared, two hundred years ago, in the wedge of Gustavus Adolphus; but in our days, when there are no more pikemen as in the fourteenth century, nor lansquenets as in the seventeenth, the ponderous triangular attack, which was in other times the base of all tactics, is replaced by a crowd of Zouaves charging with the bayonet. Some day, sooner perhaps than people think, the charge with the bayonet will be itself superseded by peace, at first European, by-and-bye, universal, and then a whole science, the military science, will vanish away. For that science, its improvement lies in its disappearance.

Science goes on unceasingly erasing itself—fruitful erasures. Who knows now what is the *Homœmeria*

of Anaximenes, which perhaps belongs in reality to Anaxagoras? Cosmography is notably amended since the time when this same Anaxagoras told Pericles that the sun was almost as large as the Peloponnesus. Many planets, and satellites of planets, have been discovered since the four stars of Medici. Entomology has made some advance since the time when it was asserted that the scarabee was somewhat of a god and a cousin of the sun—firstly, on account of the thirty toes on its feet, which correspond to the thirty days of the solar month; secondly, because the scarabee is without a female, like the sun; and when St. Clement, of Alexandria, outbidding Plutarch, made the remark that the scarabee, like the sun, passes six months in the earth and six months under it. Do you wish to have the proof of this?—refer to the *Stromates*, paragraph iv. Scholasticism itself, chimerical as it is, gives up the *Holy Meadow* of Moschus, laughs at the *Holy Ladder* of John Climacus, and is ashamed of the century in which St. Bernard, adding fuel to the stake which the Viscounts of Campania wished to put out, called Arnaud de Bresse "a man with the head of the dove and the tail of the scorpion." The *Cardinal Virtues* are no longer the law in anthropology. The *Steyardes* of the great Arnauld are decayed. However uncertain is meteorology, it is far from discussing now, as it did in the twelfth century, whether a rain which saves an army from dying of thirst is due to the Christian prayers of the Melitine legion or to the pagan intervention of Jupiter Pluvius. The astrologer, Marcian Posthumus, was for Jupiter, Tertullian was for the Melitine legion; no one stood in favour of the cloud and of the wind. Locomotion, if we go from the antique chariot of Laïus to the railway, passing by the *patache*, the track-boat, the *turgotine*, the diligence, and the mail, has made some progress indeed. The time is gone by for the famous journey from Dijon to Paris, lasting a month, and

we could not understand to-day the amazement of Henry IV. asking of Joseph Scaliger, "Is it true, Monsieur l'Escale, that you have been from Paris to Dijon without relieving your bowels?" Micrography is now far beyond Leuwenhoeck, who was himself far beyond Swammerdam. Look at the point to which spermatology and ovology are arrived to-day, and recollect Mariana reproaching Arnaud de Villeneuve, who discovered alcohol and the oil of turpentine, with the strange crime of having tried human generation in a pumpkin. Grand-Jean de Fouchy, the not over-credulous life secretary of the Academy of Sciences, a hundred years ago, would have shaken his head if any one had told him that from the solar spectrum one would pass to the igneous spectrum, then to the stellar spectrum, and that by the aid of the spectrum of flames and of the spectrum of stars, would be discovered an entirely new method of grouping the heavenly bodies, and what might be called the chemical constellations. Orffyreus, who destroyed his machine rather than allow the Landgrave of Hesse to see inside it—Orffyreus, so admired by S'Gravesande, the author of the *Matheseos Universalis Elementa*, would be laughed at by our mechanicians. A village veterinary surgeon would not inflict on horses the remedy with which Galen treated the indigestions of Marcus Aurelius. What is the opinion of the eminent specialists of our times, Desmarres at the head of them, respecting the learned discoveries of the seventeenth century by the Bishop of Titiopolis in the nasal chambers? The mummies have got on; M. Gannal makes them differently, if not better, than the Taricheutes, the Paraschistes, and the Cholchytes made them in the days of Herodotus—the first by washing the body, the second by opening it, and the third by embalming it. Five hundred years before Jesus Christ it was perfectly scientific, when a king of Mesopotamia had a daughter possessed by the devil, to send to Thebes for a god to cure her. It is not exactly

our way to treat epilepsy. In the same way have we given up expecting the kings of France to cure scrofula.

In 371, under Valens, son of Gratian le Cordier, the judges summoned to their bar a table accused of sorcery. This table had an accomplice named Hilarius. Hilarius confessed the crime. Ammianus Marcellinus has preserved for us his confession, received by Zosimus, count and fiscal advocate. "*Construximus, magnifici judices, ad cortinæ similitudinem Delphicæ infaustam hanc mensulam quam videtis; movimus tandem.*" Hilarius was beheaded. Who was his accuser? A learned geometrician and magician, the same who advised Valens to decapitate all those whose names began with a *Theod.* To-day you may call yourself Theodore, and even make a table turn, without the fear of a geometrician causing your head to be cut off.

One would very much astonish Solon the son of Execestidas, Zeno the stoic, Antipater, Eudoxus, Lysis of Tarentum, Cebes, Menedemus, Plato, Epicurus, Aristotle, and Epimenides, if one were to tell Solon that it is not the moon which regulates the year; to Zeno, that it is not proved that the soul is divided into eight parts; to Antipater, that the heaven is not formed of five circles; to Eudoxus, that it is not certain that between the Egyptians embalming the dead, the Romans burning them, and the Pæonians throwing them into ponds, the Pæonians are those who are right; to Lysis of Tarentum, that it is not exact that the sight is a hot vapour; to Cebes, that it is false that the principle of elements is the oblong triangle and the isosceles triangle; to Menedemus, that it is not true that, in order to know the secret bad intentions of men, it suffices to stick on one's head an Arcadian hat with the twelve signs of the zodiac; to Plato, that sea-water does not cure all diseases; to Epicurus, that matter is divisible *ad infinitum;* to Aristotle, that the fifth element has not

an orbicular movement, for the reason that there is no fifth element; to Epimenides, that the plague cannot be infallibly got rid of by letting black and white sheep go at random, and sacrificing to unknown gods hidden in the places where the sheep happen to stop.

If you should try to hint to Pythagoras how improbable it is that he should have been wounded at the siege of Troy, he Pythagoras, by Menelaus, two hundred and seven years before his birth, he would reply that the fact is incontestable, and that it is proved by the fact that he perfectly recognises, as having already seen it, the shield of Menelaus suspended under the statue of Apollo at Branchides, although entirely rotten, except the ivory face; that at the siege of Troy his own name was Euphorbus, and that before being Euphorbus he was Æthalides, son of Mercury, and that after having been Euphorbus, he was Hermotimus, then Pyrrhus, fisherman at Delos, then Pythagoras; that it is all evident and clear, as clear as it is clear that he was present the same day and the same minute at Metapontum and Crotona, as evident as it is evident that by writing with blood on a mirror exposed to the moon, one may see in the moon what he wrote on the mirror; and lastly, that he is Pythagoras, living at Metapontum, in the Street of the Muses, the author of the multiplication-table, and of the square of the hypothenuse, the greatest of all mathematicians, the father of exact science, and that you, you are an imbecile.

Chrysippus of Tarsus, who lived about the hundred and thirtieth olympiad, forms an era in science. This philosopher, the same who died, literally died, of laughing on seeing a donkey eat figs out of a silver basin, had studied everything, gone into the depth of everything, written seven hundred and five volumes, of which three hundred and eleven were on dialectics, without having dedicated a single one to a king—a fact which astounds Diogenes Laertius. He condensed

in his brain all human knowledge. His contemporaries named him *Light*. Chrysippus signifying *golden horse*, they said that he had got detached from the chariot of the sun. He had taken for device "TO ME." He knew innumerable things, among others these:—The earth is flat. The universe is round and limited. The best food for man is human flesh. The community of women is the base of the social order. The father ought to espouse his daughter. There is a word which kills the serpent, a word which tames the bear, a word which arrests the flight of eagles, and a word which drives the oxen from the bean-field. By pronouncing from hour to hour the three names of the Egyptian Trinity, *Amon-Mouth-Khons*, Andron of Argos contrived to cross the deserts of Libya without drinking. Coffins ought not to be manufactured of cypress wood, the sceptre of Jupiter being made of that wood. Themistoclea, priestess of Delphi, had given birth to children, and yet had remained a virgin. The just alone having authority to swear, it is by equity that Jupiter has received the name of *The Swearer*. The phœnix of Arabia lives in the fire. The earth is carried by the air as by a car. The sun drinks from the ocean, and the moon from the rivers. For these reasons the Athenians raised a statue to him on the Ceramicus, with this inscription—"To Chrysippus, who knew everything."

About the same time, Sophocles wrote "Œdipus Rex."

And Aristotle believed in the story about Andron of Argos, and Plato in the social principle of the community of women, and Gorgisippus in the earth being flat, and Epicurus admitted as a fact that the earth was supported by the air, and Hermodamantes that magic words mastered the ox, the eagle, the bear, and the serpent, and Echecrates believed in the immaculate maternity of Themistoclea, and Pythagoras in Jupiter's sceptre made of cypress wood, and Posidonius

in the ocean affording drink to the sun and in the rivers quenching the thirst of the moon, and Pyrrho in the phœnix existing in fire.

Excepting in this particular, Pyrrho was a sceptic. He made up for his belief in that phœnix by doubting everything else.

All that long groping is science. Cuvier was mistaken yesterday, Lagrange the day before yesterday, Leibnitz before Lagrange, Gassendi before Leibnitz, Cardan before Gassendi, Cornelius Agrippa before Cardan, Averroes before Agrippa, Plotinus before Averroes, Artemidorus Daldian before Plotinus, Posidonius before Artemidorus, Democritus before Posidonius, Empedocles before Democritus, Carneades before Empedocles, Plato before Carneades, Pherecydes before Plato, Pittacus before Pherecydes, Thales before Pittacus, and before Thales Zoroaster, and before Zoroaster Sanchoniathon, and before Sanchoniathon Hermes. Hermes, which signifies science, as Orpheus signifies art. Oh! wonderful marvel, this heap swarming with dreams which engender the real! O sacred errors, slow, blind, and sainted mothers of truth!

Some savants, such as Kepler, Euler, Geoffroy St. Hilaire, Arago, have brought into science nothing but light; they are rare.

At times science is an obstacle to science. The savants give way to scruples and cavil at study. Pliny is scandalized at Hipparchus; Hipparchus, with the aid of an imperfect astrolabe, tries to count the stars and to name them. An impropriety towards God, says Pliny. *Ausus rem Deo improbam.*

To count the stars is to commit a wickedness towards God. This accusation, started by Pliny against Hipparchus, is continued by the Inquisition against Campanella.

Science is the asymptote of truth. It approaches unceasingly and never touches. Nevertheless it has every greatness. It has will, precision, enthusiasm,

profound attention, penetration, shrewdness, strength, patience by concatenation, permanent watching for phenomena, the ardour of progress, and even flashes of bravery. Witness La Pérouse; witness Pilastre des Rosiers; witness John Franklin; witness Victor Jacquemont; witness Livingstone; witness Mazet; witness, at this very hour, Nadar.

But science is series. It proceeds by tests heaped one above the other, and the thick obscurity of which rises slowly to the level of truth.

Nothing like it in art. Art is not successive. All art is *ensemble.*

Let us sum up these few pages.

Hippocrates is outrun, Archimedes is outrun, Aratus is outrun, Avicennus is outrun, Paracelsus is outrun, Nicholas Flamel is outrun, Ambrose Paré is outrun, Vésale is outrun, Copernicus is outrun, Galileo is outrun, Newton is outrun, Clairaut is outrun, Lavoisier is outrun, Montgolfier is outrun, Laplace is outrun. Pindar not, Phidias not.

Pascal the savant is outrun; Pascal the writer is not.

We no longer teach the astronomy of Ptolemy, the geography of Strabo, the climatology of Cleostratus, the zoology of Pliny, the algebra of Diophantus, the medicine of Tribunus, the surgery of Ronsil, the dialectics of Sphœrus, the myology of Steno, the uranology of Tatius, the stenography of Trithemius, the pisciculture of Sebastien de Medici, the arithmetic of Stifels, the geometry of Tartaglia, the chronology of Scaliger, the meteorology of Stoffler, the anatomy of Gassendi, the pathology of Fernel, the jurisprudence of Robert Barmne, the agriculture of Quesnay, the hydrography of Bouguer, the nautics of Bourdé de Villehuet, the ballistics of Gribeauval, the veterinary practice of Garsault, the architectonics of Desgodets, the botany of Tournefort, the scholasticism of Abailard, the politics of Plato, the mechanics of Aristotle, the physics of Descartes,

the theology of Stillingfleet. We taught yesterday, we teach to-day, we shall teach to-morrow, we shall teach for ever, the "*Sing, goddess, the anger of Achilles.*"

Poetry lives a potential life. The sciences may extend its sphere, not increase its power. Homer had but four winds for his tempests; Virgil who has twelve, Dante who has twenty-four, Milton who has thirty-two, do not make their storms grander.

And it is probable that the tempests of Orpheus were as beautiful as those of Homer, although Orpheus had, to raise the waves, but two winds, the *Phœnicias* and the *Aparctias*, that is to say, the wind of the south and the wind of the north, often wrongly taken, let us say it by the way, with the *Argestes*, summer westerly wind, and the *Libs*, the winter westerly wind.

Some religions die away, and when they disappear, they bequeath a great artist to other religions coming after them. Serpio makes for the Venus Aversative of Athens a vase that the Holy Virgin accepts from Venus, and which to-day is used in the baptistery of Notre Dame at Gaëta.

O eternity of art!

A man, a corpse, a shade, from the depth of the past, through the long ages, lays hold of you.

I remember, when a youth, one day at Romorantin, in an old house we had there, under a vine arbour open to air and light, I espied a book on a plank, the only book there was in the house—*De Rerum Naturâ*, of Lucretius. My professors of rhetoric had spoken very ill of it, which was a recommendation to me. I opened the book. It was at that moment about mid-day. I came on these powerful and calm verses:*

* Nec pietas ulla est, velatum sæpe videri
Vertier ad lapidem, atque omnes accedere ad aras.
Nec procumbere humi prostratum, et pandere palmas
Ante deum delubra, neque aras sanguine multo
Spargere quadrupedum, nec votis nectere vota;
Sed mage placatâ posse omnia mente tueri.

"Religion does not consist in turning unceasingly towards the veiled stone, nor in approaching all the altars, nor in throwing oneself prostrated on the ground, nor in raising the hands before the habitations of gods, nor deluging the temples with the blood of beasts, nor in heaping vows upon vows, but in beholding all with a peaceful soul." I stopped in thought, then I began to read again. Some moments afterwards I could see nothing, hear nothing: I was immersed in the poet. At the dinner-hour I made a sign that I was not hungry, and at night, when the sun set, and when the herds were returning to their sheds, I was still in the same place reading the wonderful book; and by my side, my father with his white locks, seated on the door-sill of the low room, where his sword hung on a nail, indulging my prolonged reading, was gently calling the sheep, and they came in turn to eat a little salt in the hollow of his hand.

CHAPTER V.

POETRY cannot grow less. Why? Because it cannot grow greater.

These words, so often used, even by the lettered, "decline," "revival," show to what an extent the essence of art is ignored. Superficial intellects, easily becoming pedantic, take for revival and decline some effects of juxtaposition, some optical mirages, some exigencies of language, some ebb and flow of ideas, all the vast movement of creation and thought, the result of which is universal art. This movement is the very work of the infinite passing through the human brain.

Phenomena are only seen from the culminating point, and seen from the culminating point, poetry is immovable. There is neither rise nor decline in art. Human genius is always at its full; all the rain of heaven adds not a drop of water to the ocean. A tide is an illusion; water falls on one shore only to rise on another. You take oscillations for diminutions. To say "there will be no more poets," is to say "there will be no more ebbing."

Poetry is element. It is irreducible, incorruptible, and refractory. Like the sea, it says each time all it has to say; then it re-begins with a tranquil majesty, and with the inexhaustible variety which belongs only to unity. This diversity in what seems monotonous is the marvel of immensity.

Wave upon wave, billow after billow, foam behind foam, movement and again movement. The Iliad is moving away, the Romancero comes; the Bible sinks, the Koran surges up; after the aquilon Pindar

comes the hurricane Dante. Does everlasting poetry repeat itself? No. It is the same and it is different. Same breath, another sound.

Do you take the Cid for an imitation of Ajax? Do you take Charlemagne for a plagiary of Agamemnon? "There is nothing new under the sun." "Your novelty is the repetition of the old," &c. &c. Oh! the strange process of criticism. Then art is but a series of counterfeits! Thersites has a thief, Falstaff. Orestes has an imitator, Hamlet. The Hippogriff is the jay of Pegasus. All these poets! A crew of cheats! They pillage each other, *voilà tout.* Inspiration and swindling compounded. Cervantes plunders Apuleius, Alcestes cheats Timon of Athens. The Smynthean wood is the forest of Bondy. Out of which pocket comes the hand of Shakespeare? Out of the pocket of Æschylus.

No! neither decline, nor revival, nor plagiary, nor repetition, nor imitation. Identity of heart, difference of mind: that is all. Each great artist (we have said so already) takes, stamps art anew after his own image. Hamlet is Orestes after the effigy of Shakespeare. Figaro is Scapin, with the effigy of Beaumarchais. Grangousier is Silenus, after the effigy of Rabelais.

Everything re-begins with the new poet, and at the same time nothing is interrupted. Each new genius is abyss, yet there is tradition. Tradition from abyss to abyss, such is, in art as in the firmament, the mystery; and men of genius communicate by their effluvia, like the stars. What have they in common? Nothing. Everything.

From that pit that is called Ezekiel to that precipice that is called Juvenal, there is no solution of continuity for the thinker. Lean over this anathema, or over that satire, and the same vertigo is whirling around both. The *Apocalypse* reverberates on the polar sea of ice, and you have that aurora borealis, the *Niebelungen.* The Edda replies to the Védas.

Hence this, our starting-point, to which we are returning: art is not perfectible.

No possible decline in poetry, no possible improvement. We lose our time when we say, "*Nescio quid majus nascitur Iliade.*" Art is subject neither to diminution nor enlarging. Art has its seasons, its clouds, its eclipses, even its stains, which are splendours, perhaps its interpositions of sudden opacity for which it is not responsible; but, at the end, it is always with the same intensity that it brings light into the human soul. It remains the same furnace giving the same brilliancy. Homer does not grow cold.

Let us insist, moreover, on this, inasmuch as the emulation of minds is the life of the beautiful, O poets, the first rank is ever free. Let us remove everything which may discourage daring minds and break their wings: art is a species of valour. To deny that men of genius yet to come may be peers with men of genius of the past would be to deny the ever-working power of God.

Yes, and often do we return, and shall return again, to this necessary encouragement. Emulation is almost creation. Yes, those men of genius that cannot be surpassed may be equalled.

How?

By being different.

BOOK IV.

THE ANCIENT SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER I.

ÆSCHYLUS is the ancient Shakespeare.

Let us return to Æschylus. He is the grandsire of the stage.

This book would be incomplete if Æschylus had not his separate place in it.

A man whom we do not know how to class in his own century, so little does he belong to it, being at the same time so much behind it and so much in advance of it, the Marquis de Mirabeau, that queer customer as a philanthropist, but a very rare thinker after all, had a library, in the two corners of which he had had carved a dog and a she-goat, in remembrance of Socrates, who swore by the dog, and of Zeno, who swore by the goat. His library presented this peculiarity: on one side he had Hesiod, Sophocles, Euripides, Plato, Herodotus, Thucydides, Pindar, Theocritus, Anacreon, Theophrastus, Demosthenes, Plutarch, Cicero, Titus Livius, Seneca, Persius, Lucan, Terence, Horace, Ovid, Propertius, Tibullus, Virgil, and underneath could be read, engraved in letters of gold, "AMO;" on the other side, he had Æschylus alone, and underneath, this word—"TIMEO."

Æschylus, in reality, is formidable. He cannot be approached without trembling. He has magnitude and mystery. Barbarous, extravagant, emphatic,

antithetical, bombastic, absurd, such is the judgment passed on him by the official rhetoric of the present day. This rhetoric will be changed. Æschylus is one of those men whom superficial criticism scoffs at or disdains, but whom the true critic approaches with a sort of sacred fear. The dread of genius is the first step towards taste.

In the true critic there is always a poet, even when in a latent state.

Whoever does not comprehend Æschylus is irremediably an ordinary mind. Intellects may be tried on Æschylus.

The Drama is a strange form of art. Its diameter measures from the "Seven against Thebes" to the "Philosopher without knowing it," and from Brid'oison to Œdipus. Thyestes forms part of it, Turcaret also. If you wish to define it, put into your definition Electra and Marton.

The drama is disconcerting. It baffles the weak. This comes from its ubiquity. The drama has every horizon. You may then imagine its capacity. The epic poem has been blended in the drama, and the result is this marvellous literary novelty, which is at the same time a social power, the romance.

Bronze, amalgamation of the epic, lyric, and dramatic, such is the romance. *Don Quixotte* is iliad, ode, and comedy.

Such is the expansion possible to the drama.

The drama is the largest recipient of art. God and Satan are there; witness Job.

To look at art in the absolute point of view, the characteristic of the epic poem is grandeur; the characteristic of the drama is immensity. The immense differs from the great in this, that it excludes, if it chooses, dimension, that "it is beyond measure," as the common saying is, and that it can, without losing beauty, lose proportion. It is harmonious as is the milky way. It is by this characteristic of im-

mensity that the drama commences, four thousand years ago, in Job, whom we have just named again, and, two thousand two hundred years ago, in Æschylus; it is by this characteristic that it continues in Shakespeare. What personages does Æschylus take? Volcanoes: one of his lost tragedies is called *Etna:* then the mountains: Caucasus with Prometheus; then the sea: the Ocean on its dragon, and the waves, the Oceanides; then the vast east: the *Persians;* then the bottomless darkness: the *Eumenides.* Æschylus proves the man by the giant. In Shakespeare the drama approaches nearer to humanity, but remains colossal. Macbeth seems a polar Atrides. You see that the drama opens nature, then opens the soul; there is no limit to this horizon. The drama is life, and life is everything. The epic poem can be only great, the drama must necessarily be immense.

This immensity, it is Æschylus throughout and Shakespeare throughout.

The immense, in Æschylus, is a will. It is also a temperament. Æschylus invents the buskin which makes the man taller, and the mask which enlarges the voice. His metaphors are enormous. He calls Xerxes "the man with the dragon eyes." The sea, which is a plain for so many poets, is for Æschylus "a forest," ἄλσος. These magnifying figures, peculiar to the highest poets, and to them only, are true; they are the true emanations of reverie. Æschylus excites you to the very brink of convulsion. His tragical effects are like blows struck at the spectators. When the furies of Æschylus make their appearance, pregnant women miscarry. Pollux, the lexicographer, affirms that there were children taken with epilepsy and who died, on looking at those faces of serpents and at those torches violently tossed about. That is evidently "going beyond the aim." Even the grace of Æschylus, that strange and sovereign grace of which we have spoken, has a Cyclopean look. It is

Polyphemus smiling. At times the smile is formidable and seems to hide an obscure rage. Put, by way of example, in the presence of Helen, those two poets, Homer and Æschylus. Homer is at once conquered and admires. His admiration is forgiveness. Æschylus is moved, but remains grave. He calls Helen "*fatal flower;*" then he adds, "*soul as calm as the tranquil sea.*" One day Shakespeare will say, "*False as the wave.*"

CHAPTER II.

THE theatre is a crucible of civilization. It is a place of human communion. All its phases require to be studied. It is in the theatre that the public soul is formed.

We have just seen what the theatre was in the time of Shakespeare and Molière; shall we see what it was at the time of Æschylus?

Let us go to that spectacle.

It is no longer the cart of Thespis; it is no longer the scaffold of Susarion; it is no longer the wooden circus of Chœrilus. Athens, foreboding, perceiving the coming of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, has built theatres of stone. No roof, the sky for a ceiling, the day for lighting, a long platform of stone pierced with doors and staircases, and secured to a wall, the actors and the chorus going and coming on this platform, which is the logeum, and performing the play; in the centre, where in our days is the hole of the prompter, a small altar to Bacchus, the thymele; in front of the platform a vast hemicycle of stone steps, five or six thousand men sitting pell-mell; such is the laboratory. There it is that the swarming crowd of the Piræus come to turn Athenians; there it is that the multitude become the public, until such day when the public will become the people. The multitude is in reality there; all the multitude, including the women, the children, and the slaves, and Plato, who knits his brows.

If it is a fête-day, if we are at the Panathenæa, at the Lenæa, or at the great Dionysia, the magis-

trates form part of the audience; the proedri, the epistati, and the prytani sit in their place of honour. If the trilogy is to be a tetralogy, if the representation is to conclude by a piece with satyrs; if the fauns, the ægipans, the menades, the goat-footed, and the evantes, are to come at the end to perform their pranks; if among the comedians, almost priests, and called "the men of Bacchus," is to appear the favourite actor who excels in the two modes of declamation, in paralogy as well as in paracatology; if the poet is sufficiently liked by his rivals to let the public expect to see some celebrated men, Eupolis, Cratinus, or even Aristophanes figure in the chorus, "*Eupolis atque Cratinus, Aristophanesque poetæ,*" as Horace will one day say; if a play with women is performed, even the old "Alcestis" of Thespis, the whole place is full, there is a crowd. The crowd is already to Æschylus what, later on, as the prologue of the "Bacchides" remarks, it will be to Plautus, a swarm of men on seats, coughing, spitting, sneezing, making grimaces and noises with the mouth and "*ore concreparío,*" and talking of their affairs—what a crowd is to-day.

Students scrawl with charcoal on the wall, now in token of admiration, now in irony, some well-known verses, for instance, the singular iambic of Phrynichus in a single word—

"Archaiomelesidonophrunicherata."*

Of which the famous Alexandrine, in two words, of one of our tragic poets of the sixteenth century was but a poor imitation—

"Métamorphoserait Nabuchodonosor."

There are not only the students to make a row, there are the old men. Trust to the old men of the "Wasps" of Aristophanes for a noise. Two schools

* Ἀρκαιωμελήσιδωνοφρυνικήρατα.

are in presence, on one side Thespis, Susarion, Pratinas of Phlius, Epigenes of Sicyon, Theomis, Auleas, Chœrilus, Phrynichus, Minos himself; on the other, young Æschylus. Æschylus is twenty-eight years old. He gives his trilogy of the "Promethei;" "Prometheus lighting fire;" "Prometheus Bound;" "Prometheus Delivered," followed by some piece with satyrs, the Argians, perhaps, of which Macrobius has preserved a fragment for us. The ancient quarrel of youth and old age breaks out; grey beards against black hair; they discuss, they dispute; the old men are for the old school; the young are for Æschylus. The young defend Æschylus against Thespis, as they will defend Corneille against Garnier.

The old men are indignant. Listen to the Nestors grumbling. What is tragedy? It is the song of the he-goat. Where is the he-goat in this "Prometheus Bound?" Art is in its decline. And they repeat the celebrated objection—"*Quid pro Baccho?*" (What is there for Bacchus?) The graver men, the purists, do not even admit Thespis, and remind each other that Solon had raised his stick against Thespis, calling him "liar," for the sole reason that he had detached and isolated in a play an episode in the life of Bacchus, the history of Pentheus. They hate this innovator, Æschylus. They blame all these inventions, the end of which is to bring about a closer connexion between the drama and nature, the use of the anapæst for the chorus, of the iambus for the dialogue, and of the trochee for passion, in the same way that, later on, Shakespeare was blamed for going from poetry to prose, and the theatre of the nineteenth century for that which was termed "broken verse." These are indeed unbearable novelties. And then, the flute plays too high, and the tetrachord plays too low, and where is now the ancient sacred division of tragedies into monodies, stasimes, and exodes? Thespis never put

on the stage but one speaking actor; here is Æschylus putting two. Soon we shall have three. (Sophocles, indeed, was to come.) Where will they stop? These are impieties. And how does Æschylus dare to call Jupiter "*the prytanus of the Immortals?*" Jupiter was a god, and he is now no more than a magistrate. Where are we going? The thymele, the ancient altar of sacrifice, is now a seat for the corypheus! The chorus ought to limit itself to executing the strophe, that is to say, the turn to the right; then the antistrophe, that is to say, the turn to the left; then the epode, that is to say, repose. But what is the meaning of the chorus arriving in a winged chariot? What is the gad-fly that pursues Io? Why does the ocean come mounted on a dragon? This is show, not poetry. Where is the ancient simplicity? This show is puerile. Your Æschylus is but a painter, a decorator, a composer of brawls, a charlatan, a machinist. All for the eyes, nothing for the mind. To the fire with all those pieces, and let us content ourselves with a recitation of the ancient pæans of Tynnichus! It is Chœrilus who, by his tetralogy of the *Curetes*, has begun the evil. What are the Curetes, if you please? Gods forging metal. Well, then! he had simply to show working on the stage their five families, the Dactyli finding the metal, the Cabiri inventing the forge, the Corybantes forging the sword and the ploughshare, the Curetes making the shield, and the Telchines chasing the jewellery. It was sufficiently interesting in that form; but by allowing poets to blend in it the adventure of Plexippus and Toxeus, all is lost. How can you expect society to resist such excess? It is abominable. Æschylus ought to be summoned before justice, and sentenced to drink hemlock like that old wretch Socrates. You will see that he will only, after all, be exiled. Everything degenerates.

And the young men burst with laughter. They

criticize as well, but in another fashion. What an old brute is that Solon! It is he who has instituted the eponymous archonship. What do they want with an archon giving his name to the year? A year for the archon eponym who has lately caused a poet to be elected and crowned by ten generals, instead of taking ten men from the people. It is true that one of the generals was Cimon; an attenuating circumstance in the eyes of some, for Cimon had beaten the Phenicians, aggravating in the eyes of others, for it is this very Cimon who, in order to get out of a prison for debt, sold his sister Elphinia, and his wife in the bargain, to Callias. If Æschylus is a bold man, and deserves to be cited before the Areopagus, has not Phrynichus also been judged and condemned for having shown on the stage, in the *Taking of Miletus*, the Greeks beaten by the Persians? When will poets be allowed to suit their own fancy? Hurrah for the liberty of Pericles and down with the censure of Solon!" And then what is the law that has just been promulgated by which the chorus is reduced from fifty to fifteen? And how are they to play the *Danaïdes?* and won't they sneer at the line of Æschylus—"*Egyptus, the father of fifty sons?*" The fifty will be fifteen. These magistrates are idiots. Quarrel, uproar all round. One prefers Phrynichus, another prefers Æschylus, another prefers wine with honey and benzoin. The speaking-trumpets of the actors compete as well as they can with this deafening noise, through which is heard from time to time the shrill cry of the public vendors of phallus and the water-bearers. Such is Athenian uproar. During that time the play is going on. It is the work of a living man. The uproar has every reason to be. Later on, after the death of Æschylus, or after he has been exiled, there will be silence. It is right to be silent before a god. "*Æquum est,*" it is Plautus who speaks, "*vos deo facere silentium.*"

CHAPTER III.

A GENIUS is an accused man. As long as Æschylus lived, his life was a strife. His genius was contested, then he was persecuted—a natural progression. According to Athenian practice, his private life was unveiled, he was traduced, slandered. A woman that he had loved, Planesia, sister of Chrysilla, mistress of Pericles, has dishonoured herself in the eyes of posterity by the outrages that she publicly inflicted on Æschylus. People ascribed to him unnatural loves; people gave him, as well as Shakespeare, a Lord Southampton. His popularity was knocked to pieces. Then everything was charged to him as a crime, even his kindness to young poets, who respectfully offered to him their first laurels. It is curious to see this reproach constantly re-appearing. Pezay and St. Lambert repeat it in the eighteenth century:—

> "Pourquoi, Voltaire, à ces auteurs
> Qui t'adressent des vers flatteurs,
> Répondre, en toutes tes missives,
> Par des louanges excessives?"

Æschylus, living, was a kind of public target for all haters. Young, the ancient poets, Thespis and Phrynichus, were preferred to him. Old, the new ones, Sophocles and Euripides, were placed above him. At last he was brought before the Areopagus, and according to Suidas, because the theatre tumbled down during one of his pieces; according to Ælian, because he had blasphemed, or, which is the same thing, had

related the mysteries of Eleusis, he was exiled. He died in exile.

Then Lycurgus the orator cried, "We must raise a statue of bronze to Æschylus."

Athens had expelled the man, but raised the statue.

Thus Shakespeare, through death, entered into oblivion; Æschylus into glory.

This glory, which was to have in the course of ages its phases, its eclipses, its ebbing and rising tides, was then dazzling. Greece remembered Salamis, where Æschylus had fought. The Areopagus itself was ashamed. It felt that it had been ungrateful towards the man who, in the *Orestias*, had paid to that tribunal the supreme honour of bringing before it Minerva and Apollo. Æschylus became sacred. All the phratries had his bust, wreathed at first with bandolets, later on crowned with laurels. Aristophanes made him say in the *Frogs*—"I am dead, but my poetry liveth." In the great Eleusinian days, the herald of the Areopagus blew the Tyrrhenian trumpet in honour of Æschylus. An official copy of his ninety-seven dramas was made at the expense of the republic, and placed under the special care of the recorder of Athens. The actors who played his pieces were obliged to go and collate their parts by this perfect and unique copy. Æschylus was made a second Homer. Æschylus had, likewise, his rhapsodists, who sang his verses at the festivals, holding in their hands a branch of myrtle.

He had been right, the great and insulted man, to write on his poems this proud and mournful dedication—

TO TIME.

There was no more said about his blasphemy: it had caused him to die in exile; it was well, it was enough; it was as though it had never been. Besides, one does not know where to find that blasphemy.

*

Palingenes searched for it in an "Asterope," which, in our opinion, existed only in imagination. Musgrave sought it in the *Eumenides*. Musgrave probably was right, for the *Eumenides* being a very religious piece, the priests could not help of course to choose it to accuse him of impiety.

Let us point out a whimsical coincidence. The two sons of Æschylus, Euphorion and Bion, are said to have re-cast the *Orestias*, exactly as, two thousand three hundred years later, Davenant, Shakespeare's bastard, re-cast *Macbeth*. But in the presence of the universal respect for Æschylus after his death, such impudent tamperings were impossible, and what is true of Davenant, is evidently untrue of Bion and Euphorion.

The renown of Æschylus filled the world of those days. Egypt, feeling with reason that he was a giant and somewhat Egyptian, bestowed on him the name of "*Pimander*," signifying "Superior Intelligence." In Sicily, whither he had been banished, and where they sacrificed he-goats before his tomb at Gela, he was almost an Olympian. Later on, he was almost a prophet for the Christians, owing to the prediction in *Prometheus*, which some people thought to apply to Jesus.

Strange thing; it is this very glory which has wrecked his work.

We speak here of the material wreck, for, as we have said, the mighty name of Æschylus survives.

It is indeed a drama, and an extraordinary drama, the disappearance of those poems. A king has stupidly robbed the human mind.

Let us relate this robbery.

CHAPTER IV.

Here are the facts, the legend at least, for at such a distance and in such a twilight, history is legendary.

There was a king of Egypt, named Ptolemy Euergetes, brother-in-law to Antiochus the god.

Let us mention it *en passant*, all these people were gods:—Gods Soters, gods Evergetes, gods Epiphanes, gods Philometors, gods Philadelphi, gods Philopators. Translation: Gods saviours, gods beneficent, gods illustrious, gods loving their mother, gods loving their brothers, gods loving their father. Cleopatra was goddess Soter. The priests and priestesses of Ptolemy Soter were at Ptolemais. Ptolemy VI. was called "God-love-Mother" (*Philometor*), because he hated his mother Cleopatra; Ptolemy IV. was "God-love-Father" (*Philopator*), because he had poisoned his father. Ptolemy II. was "God-love-Brothers" (*Philadelphus*), because he had killed his two brothers.

Let us return to Ptolemy Euergetes.

He was the son of the Philadelphus who gave golden crowns to the Roman ambassadors, the same to whom the pseudo-Aristeus attributes by mistake the version of the Septuagint. This Philadelphus had much increased the library of Alexandria, which, during his lifetime, counted two hundred thousand volumes, and which, in the sixth century, attained, it is said, the incredible number of seven hundred thousand manuscripts.

This stock of human knowledge, formed under the eyes of Euclid, and by the care of Callimachus,

Diodorus Cronos, Theodorus the Atheist, Philetas, Apollonius, Aratus, the Egyptian priest Manetho, Lycophron, and Theocritus, had for its first librarian, according to some, Zenodotus of Ephesus, according to others, Demetrius of Phalerum, to whom the Athenians had raised three hundred and sixty statues, which they took one year to put up and one day to destroy. Now, this library had no copy of Æschylus. One day the Greek Demetrius said to Evergetes, "Pharaoh has not Æschylus," exactly as, later on, Leidrade, archbishop of Lyons and librarian of Charlemagne, said to Charlemagne, "The Emperor has not Scæva Memor."

Ptolemy Euergetes, wishing to complete the work of the Philadelphus his father, resolved to give Æschylus to the Alexandrian library. He declared that he would cause a copy to be made. He sent an embassy to borrow from the Athenians the unique and sacred copy under the care of the recorder of the republic. Athens, not over-prone to lend, hesitated and demanded a security. The king of Egypt offered fifteen silver talents. Now, those who wish to realize the value of fifteen talents, have but to know that it was three-fourths of the annual tribute of ransom payed by Judea to Egypt, which was twenty talents, and weighed so heavily on the Jewish people, that the high priest Onias II., founder of the Onion temple, decided to refuse this tribute at the risk of a war. Athens accepted the security. The fifteen talents were deposited. The complete copy of Æschylus was delivered to the king of Egypt. The king gave up the fifteen talents and kept the book.

Athens, indignant, had some thought of declaring war against Egypt. To reconquer Æschylus was as good as reconquering Helen. To recommence Troy, but this time to get back Homer, it was a fine thing. Yet, time was taken for consideration. Ptolemy was powerful. He had forcibly taken back from Asia the

two thousand five hundred Egyptian gods formerly carried there by Cambyses, because they were in gold and silver. He had, besides, conquered Cilicia and Syria, and all the country from the Euphrates to the Tigris. With Athens it was no longer the day when she improvised a fleet of two hundred vessels against Artaxerxes. She left Æschylus a prisoner in Egypt.

A prisoner-god. This time the word god is in its right place. They paid Æschylus unheard-of honours. The king refused, it is said, to let a copy be made of it, stupidly bent on possessing a unique copy.

Particular care was taken of this manuscript when the library of Alexandria, enlarged by the library of Pergamus, which Antony gave to Cleopatra, was transferred to the temple of Jupiter Serapis. There it was that St. Jerome came to read, in the Athenian text, the famous passage in "Prometheus" prophesying Christ: "Go and tell Jupiter that nothing shall make me name the one who is to dethrone him."

Other doctors of the Church made, from the same copy, the same verification. For, at all times, the orthodox asseverations have been combined with what have been called the testimonies of polytheism, and great efforts have been resorted to in order to make the pagans say Christian things. *Teste David cum Sibylla.* People came to the Alexandrian library, as on a pilgrimage, to examine "Prometheus;" constant visits which deceived the Emperor Adrian, and made him write to the consul Servianus, "Those who adore Serapis are Christians: those who profess to be bishops of Christ are at the same time devotees of Serapis."

Under the Roman dominion the library of Alexandria belonged to the emperor. Egypt was Cæsar's property. "*Augustus,*" says Tacitus, "*seposuit Ægyptum.*" It was not every one who could travel there. Egypt was closed. The Roman knights, and even the senators, could not easily obtain admission.

It was during this period that the complete copy

of Æschylus could be consulted and perused by Timocharis, Aristarchus, Athenæus, Stobæus, Diodorus of Sicily, Macrobius, Plotinus, Jamblichus, Sopater, Clement of Alexandria, Nepotian of Africa, Valerius Maximus, Justin the Martyr, and even by Ælian, although Ælian left Italy but seldom.

In the seventh century a man entered Alexandria. He was mounted on a camel and seated between two sacks, one full of figs, the other full of corn. These two sacks were, with a wooden platter, all that he possessed. This man never seated himself except on the ground. He drank nothing but water and ate nothing but bread. He had conquered half of Asia and of Africa, taken or burnt thirty-six thousand towns, villages, fortresses, and castles, destroyed four thousand Pagan or Christian temples, built fourteen hundred mosques, conquered Izdeger, King of Persia, and Heraclius, Emperor of the East, and he called himself Omar. He burnt the library of Alexandria.

Omar is for that reason celebrated; Louis, called the Great, has not the same celebrity, which is unjust, for he burnt the Rupertine library at Heidelberg.

CHAPTER V.

Is not now that incident a complete drama? It might be entitled "Æschylus Lost." Recital, node, and *denouement.* After Euergetes, Omar. The action begins with a robber and ends with an incendiary.

Evergetes—this is his excuse—robbed from enthusiasm. An unpleasant instance of the admiration of an imbecile.

As for Omar, he is the fanatic. By the way, we must say that strange historical rehabilitations have been attempted in our time. We do not speak of Nero, who is the fashion. But an attempt has been made to exonerate Omar, as well as to bring a verdict of not guilty for Pius V. Holy Pius V. personifies the Inquisition; to canonize him was enough, why declare him innocent? We do not lend ourselves to those attempts at appeal in trials which have received final judgment. We have no taste for rendering small services to fanaticism, whether it be Caliph or Pope, whether it burn books or men. Omar has had many advocates. A certain class of historians and biographical critics are willingly moved to pity for the sword—a victim of slander, this poor sword! Imagine then the tenderness that is felt for a scimitar! The scimitar is the ideal sword. It is better than brute, it is Turk. Omar, then, has been cleaned as much as possible. A first fire in the Bruchion district, where the Alexandrian library stood, was used as an argument to prove how easily such accidents happen. That one was the fault of Julius Cæsar, another sword. Then a second argument was found in a second fire, only partial,

of the Serapeum, in order to accuse the Christians, the demagogues of those days. If the fire at the Serapeum had destroyed the Alexandrian library in the fourth century, Hypatia would not have been able, in the fifth century, to give, in that same library, those lessons in philosophy which caused her to be murdered with broken pieces of earthen pots. About Omar we willingly believe the Arabs. Abd-Allatif saw at Alexandria about 1220 "the column of pillars supporting a cupola," and said, "There stood the library that Amrou-ben-Alas burnt by permission of Omar." Abulfaradge, in 1260, relates in his "Dynastic History," that by order of Omar they took the books from the library, and with them heated the baths of Alexandria for six months. According to Gibbon, there were at Alexandria four thousand baths. Ebn-Khaldoun, in his "Historical Prolegomena," relates another wanton destruction, the annihilation of the library of the Medes by Saad, Omar's lieutenant. Now, Omar having caused the burning of the Median library in Persia by Saad, was logical in causing the destruction of the Egyptian-Greek library in Egypt by Amrou. His lieutenants have preserved his orders for us: "If these books contain falsehoods, to the fire with them. If they contain truths, these truths are in the Koran, to the fire with them." In place of the Koran, put the Bible, Veda, Edda, Zend-Avesta, Toldos Jeschut, Talmud, Gospel, and you have the imperturbable and universal formula of all fanaticisms. This being said, we do not see any reason to reverse the verdict of history; we award to the Caliph the smoke of the seven hundred thousand volumes of Alexandria, Æschylus included, and we maintain Omar in possession of his rights as incendiary.

Euergetes, through his wish for exclusive possession, and treating a library as a seraglio, has robbed us of Æschylus. Imbecile contempt can have the same

effect as imbecile adoration. Shakespeare was very near having the fate of Æschylus. He has had, too, his fire. Shakespeare was so little printed, printing existed so little for him, thanks to the silly indifference of his immediate posterity, that in 1666 there was still but one edition of the poet of Stratford-on-Avon (Hemynge and Condell's edition), three hundred copies of which were printed. Shakespeare, with this obscure and pitiful edition, waiting in vain for the public, was a sort of poor wretch ashamed to beg for glory. These three hundred copies were nearly all stored up in London when the fire of 1666 broke out. It burnt London, and nearly burnt Shakespeare. The whole edition of Hemynge and Condell disappeared, with the exception of forty-four copies, which had been sold in fifty years. Those forty-four purchasers saved from death the work of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER VI.

The disappearance of Æschylus! stretch this catastrophe hypothetically to a few more names, and it seems as though you felt the vacuum annihilating the human mind.

The work of Æschylus was, by its extent, the greatest, certainly, of all antiquity. By the seven plays which remain to us, we may judge what that universe was.

Let us point out what Æschylus lost is.

Fourteen trilogies: the *Promethei*, of which *Prometheus Bound* formed a part; the *Seven Chiefs before Thebes*, of which there remains one piece, *The Danaid*, which comprised the *Supplicants*, written in Sicily, and in which the "Sicelism" of Æschylus is traceable; *Laïus*, which comprised *Œdipus*; *Athamas*, which ended with the *Isthmiasts*; *Perseus*, the node of which was the *Phorcydes*; *Etna*, which had as prologue the *Etnean Women*; *Iphigenia*, the *denouement* of which was the tragedy of the *Priestesses*; the *Ethiopid*, the titles of which are nowhere to be found; *Pentheus*, in which were the *Hydrophores*; *Teucer*, which opened with the *Judgment of Arms*; *Niobe*, which commenced with the *Nurses* and ended with the *Men of the Train*; a trilogy in honour of Achilles, the *Tragic Iliad*, composed of the *Myrmidons*, the *Nereids*, and the *Phrygians*; one in honour of Bacchus, the *Lycurgia*, composed of the *Edons*, the *Bassarides*, and the *Young Men*.

These fourteen trilogies in themselves alone give a total of fifty-six plays, if we consider that nearly all were tetralogies—that is to say, quadruple dramas, and

ended with a satyride. Thus the *Orestias* had, as a final satyride, *Proteus*, and the *Seven Chiefs before Thebes* had the *Sphinx*.

Add to those fifty-six pieces a probable trilogy of the *Labdacides;* add the tragedies, the *Egyptians*, the *Ransom of Hector*, *Memnon*, undoubtedly connected with some trilogies; add all the satyrides, *Sisyphus the Deserter*, the *Heralds*, the *Lion*, the *Argians*, *Amymone*, *Circe*, *Cercyon*, *Glaucus the Mariner*, comedies in which was found the mirth of that wild genius.

See all that is lost.

Euergetes and Omar have robbed us of all that.

It is difficult to state precisely the total number of pieces written by Æschylus. The amount varies. The anonymous biographer speaks of seventy-five, Suidas of ninety, Jean Deslyons of ninety-seven, Meursius of one hundred.

Meursius reckons up more than a hundred titles, but some are probably used twice.

Jean Deslyons, doctor of the Sorbonne, theologal of Senlis, author of the *Discours ecclesiastique contre le paganisme du Roi boit*, published in the seventeenth century a work against the custom of laying coffins one above the other in the cemeteries, in which he took for his authority the twenty-fifth canon of the Council of Auxerre, "*Non licet mortuum super mortuum mitti.*" Deslyons, in a note added to that work, now very scarce, and a copy of which was in the possession of Charles Nodier, if our memory is faithful, quotes a passage from the great antiquarian numismatist of Venloo, Hubert Goltzius, in which, in reference to embalming, Goltzius mentions the "Egyptians" of Æschylus, and "The Apotheosis of Orpheus," a title omitted in the enumeration given by Meursius. Goltzius adds that "The Apotheosis of Orpheus" was recited at the mysteries of the Lycomidians.

This title, "The Apotheosis of Orpheus," opens a field for thought. Æschylus speaking of Orpheus,

the Titan measuring the giant, the god interpreting the god, what more magnificent, and how one would long to read that work! Dante, speaking of Virgil and calling him his master, does not fill up this gap, because Virgil, a noble poet, but without invention, is less than Dante; it is between equals, from genius to genius, from sovereign to sovereign, that such homage is splendid. Æschylus raises to Orpheus a temple of which he might occupy the altar himself; it is grand.

CHAPTER VII.

ÆSCHYLUS is incommensurate. There is in him something of India. The wild majesty of his stature recalls those vast poems of the Ganges which walk through art with the steps of a mammoth, and which have, among the Iliads and the Odysseys, the appearance of hippopotami among lions. Æschylus, a thorough Greek, is yet something else besides a Greek. He has the Oriental immensity.

Saumaise declares that he is full of Hebraisms and Syrianisms, "*Hebraïsmis et Syrianismis.*" Æschylus makes the Winds carry Jupiter's throne, as the Bible makes the Cherubim carry Jehovah's throne, as the Rig-Veda makes the Marouts carry the throne of Indra. The winds, the cherubim, and the marouts are the same beings, the Breezes. Saumaise is right. The double-meaning words, so frequent in the Phœnician language, abound in Æschylus. He plays, for instance, in reference to Jupiter and Europa, on the Phœnician word *ilpha*, which has the double meaning of Ship and Bull. He loves that language of Tyre and Sidon, and at times he borrows the strange gleams of its style; the metaphor, "Xerxes with the dragon eyes," seems an inspiration from the Ninevite dialect, in which the word *draka* meant at the same time dragon and clear-sighted. He has Phœnician heresies; his heifer Io is rather the cow of Isis; he believes, like the priests of Sidon, that the temple of Delphi was built by Apollo with a paste made of wax and bees'-wings. In his exile in Sicily, he often drank religiously at the fountain of Arethusa, and never did the shep-

herds who watched him hear him name Arethusa otherwise than by this mysterious name, *Alphaga*, an Assyrian word signifying "source surrounded with willows."

Æschylus is, in the whole Hellenic literature, the sole example of the Athenian mind with a mixture of Egypt and Asia. These depths were repugnant to the Greek intelligence. Corinth, Epidaurus, Œdepsus, Gythium, Cheronea, which was to be the birth-place of Plutarch, Thebes, where Pindar's house was, Mantinea, where the glory of Epaminondas shone, all these golden towns repudiated the Unknown, a glimpse of which was seen like a cloud behind the Caucasus. It seemed as though the sun was Greek. The sun, used to the Parthenon, was not made to enter the diluvian forests of Grand Tartary, under the gigantic mouldiness of the monocotyledons, under the lofty ferns of five hundred cubits, where swarmed all the first dreadful models of nature, and under whose shadows existed unknown, shapeless cities, such as that fabulous Anarodgurro, the existence of which was denied until it sent an embassy to Claudius. Gagasmira, Sambulaca, Maliarpha, Barygaza, Caveripatnam, Sochoth-Benoth, Theglath-Phalazar, Tana-Serim, all these almost hideous names affrighted Greece when they came to be reported by the adventurers on their return, first by those with Jason, then by those of Alexander. Æschylus had no such horror. He loved the Caucasus. It was there he had made the acquaintance of Prometheus. One almost feels in reading Æschylus, that he had haunted the vast primitive thickets now become coal mines, and that he has taken huge strides over the roots, snake-like and half-living, of the ancient vegetable monsters. Æschylus is a kind of behemoth among geniuses.

Let us say, however, that the affinity of Greece with the East, an affinity hated by the Greeks, was real. The letters of the Greek alphabet are nothing

else but the letters of the Phœnician alphabet reversed. Æschylus was all the more Greek from the fact of his being a little of a Phœnician.

This powerful mind, at times apparently crude on account of his very grandeur, has the Titanic gaiety and affability. He indulges in quibbles on the names of Prometheus, Polynices, Helen, Apollo, Ilion, on the cock and the sun, imitating in this respect Homer, who made on the olive that famous pun which caused Diogenes to throw away his plate of olives and eat a tart.

The father of Æschylus, Euphorion, was a disciple of Pythagoras. The soul of Pythagoras, that philosopher half magian and half brahmin, seemed to have entered through Euphorion into Æschylus. We have said already that in the dark and mysterious quarrel between the celestial and the terrestrial Gods, the intestinal war of paganism, Æschylus was terrestrial. He belonged to the faction of the gods of earth. The Cyclops had worked for Jupiter, he rejected them as we would reject a corporation of workers who had turned traitors, and he preferred to them the Cabyri. He adored Ceres. "O thou, Ceres, nurse of my soul!" and Ceres is Demeter, is Ge-meter, is the mother-earth. Hence his veneration for Asia. It seemed then as though Earth was rather in Asia than elsewhere. Asia is, in reality, compared with Europe, a kind of block almost without capes and gulfs, and little penetrated by the sea. The Minerva of Æschylus says "Great Asia."—"The sacred soil of Asia" says the chorus of the Oceanides. In his epitaph, graven on his tomb at Gela and written by himself, Æschylus attests "the Mede with long hair." He makes the chorus celebrate "Susicanes and Pegastagon, born in Egypt, and the chief of Memphis the sacred city." Like the Phœnicians, he gives the name of "Oncea" to Minerva. In the "Etna" he celebrates the Sicilian Dioscuri, the Palici, those twin gods

whose worship, connected with the local worship of Vulcan, had reached Asia through Sarepta and Tyre. He calls them "the venerable Palici." Three of his trilogies are entitled the Persians, the Ethiopid, the Egyptians. In the geography of Æschylus, Egypt was Asia, as well as Arabia. Prometheus says, "the flower of Arabia, the heroes of Caucasus" Æschylus was, in geography, very peculiar. He had a Gorgonian city Cysthenes, which he placed in Asia, as well as a river Pluto, rolling gold, and defended by men with a single eye, the Arimaspes. The pirates to whom he makes allusion somewhere are, according to all appearance, the pirates of Angria who inhabited the rock Vizindruk. He could see distinctly beyond the Pas-du-Nil in the mountains of Byblos, the source of the Nile, still unknown to-day. He knew the precise spot where Prometheus had stolen the fire, and he designated without hesitation Mount Mosychlus, in the neighbourhood of Lemnos.

When this geography ceases to be fanciful, it is exact as an itinerary. It becomes true and remains without measure. Nothing more real than that splendid transmission of the news of the capture of Troy in one night by bonfires lighted one after the other and corresponding from mountain to mountain, from Mount Ida to the promontory of Hermes, from the promontory of Hermes to Mount Athos, from Mount Athos to Mount Macispe, from the Macispe to the Messapius, from Mount Messapius over the river Asopus to Mount Cytheron; from Mount Cytheron over the morass of Gorgopis to Mount Egiplanctus; from Mount Egiplanctus to Cape Saronica (later Spireum), from Cape Saronica to Mount Arachne, from Mount Arachne to Argos. You may follow on the map that train of fire announcing Agamemnon to Clytemnestra.

This bewildering geography is mingled with an extraordinary tragedy, in which you hear dialogues more

than human :—PROMETHEUS. "Alas!" — MERCURY. "This is a word that Jupiter speaks not"—and where Gerontes is the Ocean. "To look a fool," says the Ocean to Prometheus, "is the secret of the sage." Saying as deep as the sea. Who knows the mental reservations of the tempest? And the Power exclaims "There is but one free God, it is Jupiter."

Æschylus has his own geography; he had also his fauna.

This fauna, which strikes as fabulous, is enigmatical rather than chimerical. The author of these lines has discovered and authenticated at the Hague, in a glass in the Japanese Museum, the impossible serpent in the Orestias, having two heads attached to its two extremities. There are, it may be added, in that glass several specimens of bestiality that might belong to another world, at all events strange and not accounted for, as we are little disposed to admit, for our part, the absurd hypothesis of the Japanese stitchers of monsters.

Æschylus at moments sees nature with simplifications stamped with a mysterious disdain. Here the Pythagorician disappears, and the magian shows himself. All beasts are the beast. Æschylus seems to see in the animal kingdom only a dog. The griffin is a "dumb dog;" the eagle is a "winged dog." "The winged dog of Jupiter," says Prometheus.

We have just pronounced the word magian. In fact Æschylus officiates at times like Job. One would suppose that he exercises over nature, over human creatures, and even over gods, a kind of magianism. He upbraids animals for their voracity. A vulture which seizes, even while running, a doe-hare with young, and feeds on it, "eats a whole race stopped in its flight." He calls on the dust and on the smoke; to the first he says, "sister, thirsty for mud," to the other "black sister of fire." He insults the dreaded bay of Salmydessus, "hard-hearted mother of vessels."

He brings down to dwarfish proportions the Greeks, conquerors of Troy by treachery; he shows them brought forth by an implement of war; he calls them "these young of a horse." As for the gods, he goes so far as to incorporate Apollo with Jupiter. He gorgeously calls Apollo "the conscience of Jupiter."

His connexive boldness is absolute, characteristic of sovereignty. He makes the sacrificer take Iphigenia "as a she-goat." A queen who is a faithful spouse, is for him "the good house-bitch." As for Orestes, he has seen him when quite a child, and he speaks of him as "wetting his swaddling-clothes," *humectatio ex urinâ.* He even goes beyond this Latin. The expression, which we do not repeat here, is to be found in *Les Plaideurs,* (act iii. scene 3.). If you are bent upon reading the word which we hesitate to write, apply to Racine.

The whole is immense and mournful. The profound despair of fate is in Æschylus. He shows in terrible lines "the impotence which chains down, as in a dream, the blind living creatures." His tragedy is nothing else but the old Orphean dithyrambic suddenly launching into tears and lamentations over man.

CHAPTER VIII.

Aristophanes loved Æschylus by that law of affinity which causes Marivaux to love Racine.

Tragedy and comedy made to understand one another.

The same distracted and all-powerful breath fills Æschylus and Aristophanes. They are the two inspired spirits of the antique mask.

Aristophanes, who is not yet judged, adhered to the mysteries, to Cecropian poetry, to Eleusis, to Dodona, to the Asiatic twilight, to the profound pensive dream. This dream, whence sprung the art of Egina, was at the threshold of the Ionian philosophy in Thales as well as at the threshold of the Italian philosophy in Pythagoras. It was the sphinx guarding the entrance.

This sphinx has been a muse, the great pontifical and lascivious muse of universal rut, and Aristophanes loved it. This sphinx breathed tragedy into Æschylus, and comedy into Aristophanes. It had something of Cybele. The ancient sacred immodesty is in Aristophanes. At moments he has Bacchus foaming at the lips. He came from the Dionysia, or from the Aschosia, or from the great Trieteric Orgy, and he strikes one as a raving maniac of the mysteries. His wild verse resembles the bassaride hopping giddily upon bladders filled with air. Aristophanes has the sacerdotal obscurity. He is for nudity against love. He denounces the Phedras and Sthenobæas and he creates *Lysistrata.*

Let no one be deceived on this point, it was religion,

and a cynic was an austere mind. The gymnosophists were the point of intersection between lewdness and thought. The he-goat, with its philosopher's beard, belonged to that sect. That dark ecstatic and bestial oriental spirit lives still in the santon, the dervish, and the fakir. The corybantes were a kind of Greek fakirs. Aristophanes, like Diogenes, belonged to that family. Æschylus, by the oriental bent of his nature, nearly belonged to it himself, but he retained the tragic chastity.

That mysterious naturalism was the ancient spirit of Greece. It was called poetry and philosophy. It had under it the group of the seven sages, one of whom, Periander, was a tyrant. Now, a certain vulgar, mean spirit appeared with Socrates. It was sagacity clearing and bottling up wisdom. Reduction of Thales and Pythagoras to the immediate True. Such was the operation. A sort of filtering, which, purifying and weakening, allowed the ancient divine doctrine to percolate, drop by drop, and become human. These simplifications disgust fanaticism; dogmas object to a process of sifting. To ameliorate a religion is to lay violent hands on it. Progress offering its services to faith, offends it. Faith is an ignorance which professes to know, and which, in certain cases, knows perhaps more than science. In the face of the lofty affirmations of believers, Socrates had an uncomfortably sly half-smile. There is something of Voltaire in Socrates. Socrates denounces all the Eleusinian philosophy as unintelligible and indiscernible, and he said to Euripides that to understand Heraclitus and the old philosophers, "one required to be a swimmer of Delos;" in other words, a swimmer capable to land on an isle which was always receding before him. That was impiety and sacrilege for the ancient Hellenic naturalism. There was no other cause for the antipathy of Aristophanes towards Socrates.

This antipathy was quite fearful: the poet showed himself a persecutor; he has lent assistance to the oppressors against the oppressed, and his comedy has been guilty of crimes. Aristophanes, dark chastisement, has remained in the eyes of posterity in the condition of a wicked genius. But there is for him one attenuating circumstance: he was an ardent admirer of the poet of "Prometheus," and to admire him was to defend him. Aristophanes did what he could to prevent his banishment, and if any thing can diminish one's indignation in reading the "Clouds" implacable on Socrates, it is that one may see in the background the hand of Aristophanes holding the mantle of Æschylus going into exile. Æschylus has likewise a comedy, a sister of the broad farce of Aristophanes. We have spoken of his mirth. It goes very far in "The Argians." It equals Aristophanes, and outstrips the Shrove-Tuesday of our Carnival. Listen: "He throws at my head a chamber utensil. The full vase falls on my head, and is broken, odoriferous, but in a different manner from an urnful of perfume." Who says that? Æschylus. And in his turn Shakespeare will come and will exclaim through Falstaff's lips—"Empty the jorden." What can you say? You have to deal with savages.

One of those savages is Molière. Witness, from one end to the other, the *Malade Imaginaire*. Racine also is somewhat one of them. See *Les Plaideurs*, already mentioned.

The Abbé Camus was a witty bishop—a rare thing at all times—and what is more, he was a good man. He would have deserved this reproach of another bishop, "*Bon jusqu' à la bêtise.*" Perhaps he was good because he had wit. He gave to the poor all the revenue of his bishopric of Belley. He objected to canonization. It was he who said: "*Il n'est chasse que de vieux chiens et châsse que de vieux saints;*" and although he did not like the new-comers in sanc-

tity, he was a friend of St. François de Sales, by whose advice he wrote novels. He relates in one of his letters that one day François de Sales said to him, "The church laughs readily."

Art also laughs readily. Art, which is a temple, has its laughter. Whence comes this hilarity? All at once, in the midst of *chefs-d'œuvre*, serious figures, a buffoon stands up and blurts out a *chef-d'œuvre* also. Sancho Panza jostles Agamemnon. All the marvels of thought are there, irony comes to complicate and complete them. Enigma. Behold art, great art, breaking into an access of gaiety. Its problem, matter, amuses it. It was forming it, now it deforms it. It was shaping it for beauty, now it delights in extracting from it ugliness. It seems to forget its responsibility. It does not forget it, however, for suddenly, behind the grimace, philosophy makes its appearance. A philosophy smooth, less sidereal, more terrestrial, quite as mysterious as the grave philosophy. The unknown which is in man, and the unknown which is in things, face each other, and it turns out that in the act of meeting, these two augurs, Nature and Fate, cannot keep their serious countenance. Poetry, laden with anxieties, befools—whom? Itself. A mirth, which is not serenity, gushes out from the incomprehensible. An unknown, lofty, and sinister raillery flashes the lightning through the human darkness. The shadows piled up around us play with our soul. Formidable blossoming of the unknown. The jest proceeds from the abyss.

This alarming mirth in art is called, in olden times, Aristophanes, and in modern times, Rabelais.

When Pratinas the Dorian had invented the play with satyrs, comedy making its appearance opposite tragedy, mirth by the side of mourning, the two styles ready perhaps to unite, it was a matter of scandal. Agathon, the friend of Euripides, went to Dodona to consult Loxias. Loxias is Apollo. Loxias means

crooked, and Apollo was called "The Crooked," on account of his oracles being always obscure and given to double-meaning ways. Agathon inquired from Apollo whether the new style was not impious, and whether comedy existed by right as well as tragedy. Loxias answered: "Poetry has two ears."

This answer, which Aristotle declares obscure, seems to us very clear. It sums up the entire law of art. Two problems, in fact, are in presence: in the full light the first problem, noisy, tumultuous, stormy, clamorous, the vast vital causeway, offering every direction to the ten thousand feet of man; the quarrels, the uproar, the passions with their why? the evil, which undergoes suffering the first, for to be evil is worse than doing it; sorrows, griefs, tears, cries, rumours; in the shade, the second one, mute problem, immense silence, with an inexpressible and terrible meaning. And poetry has two ears; one which listens to life, the other which listens to death.

CHAPTER IX.

THE power that Greece had to evolve her luminous effluvia is prodigious, even to-day that we see in France. Greece did not colonize without civilizing. Example that more than one modern nation might follow. To buy and sell is not everything.

Tyre bought and sold; Berytus bought and sold; Sidon bought and sold; Sarepta bought and sold. Where are these cities? Athens taught; Athens is still at this hour one of the capitals of human thought.

The grass is growing on the six steps of the tribune where spoke Demosthenes; the Ceramicus is a ravine half-choked with the marble-dust which was once the palace of Cecrops; the Odeon of Herod Atticus is now at the foot of the Acropolis, but a ruin on which falls, at certain hours, the imperfect shadow of the Parthenon; the temple of Theseus belongs to the swallows, the goats browse on the Pnyx. Still the Greek spirit is living; still Greece is queen; still Greece is goddess. A commercial firm passes away—a school remains.

It is curious to say to one's self to-day that twenty-two centuries ago small towns, isolated and scattered on the outskirts of the known world, possessed, all of them, theatres. In point of civilization, Greece began always by the construction of an academy, of a portico, or of a logeum. Whoever could have seen, nearly at the same period, rising at a short distance one from the other, in Umbria, the Gallic town of Sens (now Sinigaglia), and, near Vesuvius, the Hellenic city Parthenopea (at present Naples), would have recognised

Gaul by the big stone standing all red with blood, and Greece by the theatre.

This civilization by poetry and art had such a mighty force, that sometimes it subdued even war. The Sicilians—Plutarch relates it in speaking of Nicias—gave liberty to the Greek prisoners who sang the verses of Euripides.

Let us point out some very little known and very singular facts.

The Messenian colony, Zancle, in Sicily; the Corinthian colony, Corcyra, distinct from the Corcyra of the Absyrtides Islands; the Cycladian colony, Cyrene, in Libya; the three Phocean colonies, Helea in Lucania, Palania in Corsica, Marseilles in France, had theatres. The gad-fly having pursued Io all along the Adriatic Gulf, the Ionian Sea reached as far as the harbour of Venetus, and Tregeste (now Trieste) had a theatre. A theatre at Salpe, in Apulia; a theatre at Squillacium, in Calabria; a theatre at Thernus, in Livadia; a theatre at Lysimachia, founded by Lysimachus, Alexander's lieutenant; a theatre at Scapta-Hyla, where Thucydides had gold-mines; a theatre at Byzia, where Theseus had lived; a theatre in Chaonia, at Buthrotum, where performed those equilibrists from Mount Chimera whom Apuleius admired on the Pœcile; a theatre in Pannonia, at Bude, where the Metanastes were, that is to say, the "Transplanted." Many of these colonies, situated afar, were much exposed. In the Isle of Sardinia, which the Greeks named Ichnusa, on account of its resemblance to the sole of the foot, Calaris (now Cagliari) was, so to speak, under the Punic clutch; Cibalis, in Mysia, had to fear the Triballi; Aspalathon, the Illyrians; Tomis, the future resting-place of Ovid, the Scordisci; Miletus, in Anatolia, the Massagetes; Denia, in Spain, the Cantabriaus; Salmydessus, the Molossians; Carsina, the Tauro-Scythians; Gelonus, the Arymphaeans of Sarmatia who lived on acorns; Apollonia, the

Hamaxobians, wandering in their chariots; Abdera, the birthplace of Democritus, the Thracians, men tattooed all over:—all these towns, by the side of their citadel, had a theatre. Why? Because the theatre keeps alight the flame of love for the fatherland. Having the barbarians at their gates, it was important that they should remain Greeks. The national spirit is the strongest of bulwarks.

The Greek drama was profoundly lyrical. It was often less a tragedy than a dithyramb. It had occasionally strophes as powerful as swords. It rushed on the scene, wearing the helmet, and it was an ode armed *cap-à-pie*. We know what a Marseillaise can do.

Many of these theatres were in granite, some in brick. The theatre of Apollonia was in marble. The theatre of Salmydessus, which could be moved to the Doric place or to the Epiphanian place, was a vast scaffolding rolling on cylinders, after the fashion of those wooden towers which they thrust against the stone towers of besieged towns.

And what poet did they play by preference at these theatres? Æschylus.

Æschylus was for Greece the autochthonic poet. He was more than Greek, he was Pelasgian. He was born at Eleusis, and not only was he Eleusian, but Eleusiatic; that is to say, a believer. It is the same shade as English and Anglican. The Asiatic element, the grandiose deformation of this genius, increased the respect; for people said that the great Dionysius, that Bacchus, common to the West and the East, came in his dreams to dictate to him his tragedies. You find again in that "L'Alleur" of Shakespeare.

Æschylus, Eupatride and Eginetic, struck the Greeks as more Greek than themselves. In those times of code and dogma mingled together, to be sacerdotal was an elevated way of being national. Fifty-two of his tragedies had been crowned. On leaving

the theatre after the performance of the plays of Æschylus, the men would strike the shields hung at the doors of the temples, crying, "Fatherland—fatherland!" Let us add here, that to be hieratic did not hinder him from being demotic. Æschylus loved the people, and the people adored him. There are two sides to greatness: majesty is one, familiarity is the other. Æschylus was familiar with the turbulent and generous mob of Athens. He often gave to that mob a fine part in his plays. See, in the *Orestias*, how tenderly the chorus, which is the people, receive Cassandra! The queen uses roughly and scares the slave, whom the chorus tries to reassure and soothe. Æschylus had introduced the people in his grandest works: in "Pentheus," with the tragedy of *The Wool-combers;* in "Niobe," with the tragedy of the *Nurses;* in "Athamas," with the tragedy of the *Net-drawers;* in "Iphigenia," with the tragedy of the *Bed-makers.* It was on the side of the people that he turned the balance in that mysterious drama, *The Weighing of Souls.** Therefore had he been chosen to preserve the sacred fire.

In all the Greek colonies they played the *Orestias*, and *The Persians.* Æschylus being present, the fatherland was no longer absent. The magistrates ordered these almost religious representations. The gigantic Æschylian theatre was entrusted with watching over the infancy of the colonies. It enclosed them in the Greek spirit, it guaranteed them from the influence of bad neighbours, and from all temptations of being led astray. It preserved them from foreign contact, it maintained them within the Hellenic circle. It was there as a warning. All those young offsprings of Greece were, so to speak, placed under the care of Æschylus.

In India they readily give the children into the charge of elephants. These enormous specimens of

* The "Psychostasia."

goodness watch over the little things. The whole group of flaxen heads sing, laugh, and play under the shade of the trees. The habitation is at some distance. The mother is not with them; she is at home, busy with her domestic cares, she pays no attention to her children. Yet, joyful as they are, they are in danger. These beautiful trees are treacherous; they hide under their thickness thorns, claws, and teeth. There the cactus bristles up, the lynx roams, the viper crawls. The children must not wander away; beyond a certain limit they would be lost. Nevertheless, they run about, call to each other, pull and entice one another away, some of them scarcely stuttering, and quite unsteady on their little feet. At times one of them goes too far. Then a formidable trunk is stretched out, seizes the little one, and gently carries him home.

CHAPTER X.

THERE were some copies more or less complete of Æschylus.

Besides the copies in the colonies, which were limited to a small number of pieces, it is certain that partial copies of the original at Athens were made by the Alexandrian critics and scholars, who have left us some fragments, among others the comic fragment of the "Argians," the Bacchic fragment of the "Edons," the lines cited by Stobæus, and even the probably apocryphal verses given by Justin the Martyr.

These copies, buried but perhaps not destroyed, have buoyed up the persistent hope of searchers, notably of Le Clerc, who published in Holland, in 1709, the discovered fragments of Menander. Pierre Pelhestre, of Rouen, the man who had read everything, for which the worthy Archbishop Péréfixe scolded him, affirmed that the greater part of the poems of Æschylus would be found in the libraries of the monasteries of Mount Athos, just as the five books of the *Annals* of Tacitus had been discovered in the Convent of Corwey in Germany, and the *Institutions* of Quintilian, in an old tower of the Abbey of St. Gall.

A tradition, not undisputed, would have it that Euergetes II. had returned to Athens, not the original copy of Æschylus, but a copy, leaving the fifteen talents as a compensation.

Independently of the story about Euergetes and Omar that we have related, and which, very true in

the whole, is perhaps legendary in more than one particular, the loss of so many beautiful works of antiquity is but too well explained by the small number of copies. Egypt, in particular, transcribed everything on papyrus. The papyrus, being very dear, became very rare. People were reduced to write on pottery. To break a vase was to destroy a book. About the time when Jesus Christ was painted on the walls at Rome, with the hoofs of an ass, and this inscription, "The God of the Christians, hoof of an ass," in the third century, to make ten manuscripts of Tacitus yearly, or, as we should say to-day, to strike off ten copies of his works, a Cæsar must needs call himself Tacitus, and believe Tacitus to be his uncle. And yet Tacitus is nearly lost. Of the twenty-eight years of his "History of the Cæsars," going from the year sixty-nine to the year ninety-six, we have but one complete year, sixty-nine, and a fragment of the year seventy. Euergetes prohibited the exportation of papyrus, which caused parchment to be invented. The price of papyrus was so high, that Firmius the Cyclop, manufacturer of papyrus, in 270 made by his trade enough money to raise armies, wage war against Aurelian, and declare himself emperor.

Gutenberg is a redeemer. These submersions of the works of the mind, inevitable before the invention of printing, are impossible at present. Printing is the discovery of the inexhaustible. It is perpetual motion found for social science. From time to time a despot seeks to stop or to slacken it, and he is worn away by the friction. The impossibility to shackle thought, the impossibility to stop progress, the book imperishable, such is the result of printing. Before printing, civilization was subject to losses of substance. The indications essential to progress, derived from such a philosopher or such a poet, made all at once default. A page was suddenly torn from the human book. To disinherit humanity of all the great bequests

of genius, the stupidity of a copyist or the caprice of a tyrant sufficed. No such danger in the present day. Henceforth the unseizable reigns. No one could serve a writ upon thought and take up its body. It has no longer a body. The manuscript was the body of the masterpiece; the manuscript was perishable, and carried off the soul, the work. The work, made a printed sheet, is delivered. It is now only a soul. Kill now this immortal! Thanks to Gutenberg, the copy is no longer exhaustible. Every copy is a root, and has in itself its own possible regeneration in thousands of editions—the unit is pregnant with the innumerable. This prodigy has saved universal intelligence. Gutenberg, in the fifteenth century emerges from the awful obscurity, bringing out of the darkness that ransomed captive the human mind. Gutenberg is for ever the auxiliary of life; he is the permanent fellow-workman in the great work of civilization. Nothing is done without him. He has marked the transition of the man-slave to the free-man. Try and deprive civilization of him, you become Egypt. The decrease of the liberty of the press is enough to diminish the stature of a people.

One of the great features in this deliverance of man by printing, is, let us insist on it, the indefinite preservation of poets and philosophers. Gutenberg is like the second father of the creations of the mind. Before him, yes, it was possible for a *chef-d'œuvre* to die.

Greece and Rome have left—mournful thing to say—vast ruins of books. A whole *façade* of the human mind half crumbled, that is antiquity. Here the ruin of an epic poem, there a tragedy dismantled; great verses effaced, buried and disfigured, pediments of ideas almost entirely fallen, geniuses truncated like columns, palaces of thought without ceiling and door, bleached bones of poems—a death's-head which has

been a strophe, immortality in ruins. Fearful nightmare! Oblivion, dark spider, hangs its web between the drama of Æschylus and the history of Tacitus.

Where is Æschylus? — in pieces everywhere. Æschylus is scattered in twenty texts. His ruins must be sought in innumerable different places. Athenæus gives the dedication *To Time*, Macrobius the fragment of *Etna* and the homage to the Palic gods, Pausanias the epitaph, the anonymous biographers, Goltzius and Meursius, the titles of the lost pieces.

We know from Cicero, in the *Disputationes Tusculanæ*, that Æschylus was a Pythagorean; from Herodotus, tha the fought bravely at Marathon; from Diodorus of Sicily, that his brother Amynias behaved valiantly at Platæa; from Justin, that his brother Cynegyrus was heroic at Salamis. We know by the didascalies that the *Persians* were represented under the archon Meno, *The Seven Chiefs before Thebes* under the archon Theagenides, and the *Orestias* under the archon Philocles; we know from Aristotle that Æschylus was the first to venture to make two personages speak at a time on the stage; from Plato that the slaves were present at his plays; from Horace, that he invented the mask and the buskin; from Pollux, that pregnant women miscarried at the appearance of his Furies; from Philostratus, that he abridged the monodies; from Suidas, that his theatre tumbled down under the pressure of the crowd; from Ælian, that he committed blasphemy; from Plutarch, that he was exiled; from Valerius Maximus, that an eagle killed him by letting a tortoise fall on his head; from Quintilian, that his plays were re-cast; from Fabricius, that his sons are accused of this crime of leze-paternity; from the Arundel marbles, the date of his birth, the date of his death, and his age, sixty-nine years.

Now take away from the drama the East and re-

place it by the North, take away Greece and put England, take away India and put Germany, that other immense mother, *All-men;* take away Pericles and put Elizabeth, take away the Parthenon and put the Tower of London, take away the plebs, and put the mob, take away the fatality and put the melancholy, take away the gorgon and put the witch, take away the eagle and put the cloud, take away the sun and put on the heath shuddering in the evening wind the livid light of the moon, and you have Shakespeare.

Given the dynasty of men of genius, the originality of each being absolutely reserved, the poet of the Carlovingian formation being the natural successor of the poet of the Jupiterian formation and the gothic mist of the antique mystery, Shakespeare is Æschylus II.

There remains the right of the French Revolution, creator of the third world, to be represented in Art. Art is an immense gaping chasm, ready to receive all that is within possibility.

BOOK V.

THE SOULS.

CHAPTER I.

The production of souls is the secret of the unfathomable depth. The innate, what a shadow! What is that concentration of the unknown which takes place in the darkness, and whence abruptly bursts forth that light, a genius? What is the law of these events? O Love! The human heart does its work on earth, and that moves the great deep. What is that incomprehensible meeting of material sublimation and moral sublimation in the atom, indivisible if looked at from life, incorruptible if looked at from death? The atom, what a marvel! No dimension, no extent, nor height, nor width, nor thickness, independent of every possible measure; and yet, everything in this nothing! For algebra, the geometrical point. For philosophy, a soul. As a geometrical point, the basis of science; as a soul, the basis of faith. Such is the atom. Two urns, the sexes, imbibe life from the infinite, and the spilling of one into the other produces the being. This is the normal condition of all, animal as well as man. But the man more than man, whence comes he?

The Supreme intelligence, which here below is the great man, what is the power which invokes it, incorporates it, and reduces it to a human state? What

part do the flesh and the blood take in this prodigy? Why do certain terrestrial sparks seek certain celestial molecules? Where do they plunge, those sparks? Where do they go? how do they manage? What is this gift of man to set fire to the unknown? This mine, the infinite, this extraction, a genius, what more wonderful! Whence does that spring up? Why, at a given moment, this one and not that one? Here, as everywhere, the incalculable law of affinities appears and escapes. One gets a glimpse, but sees not. O forger of the unfathomable, where art thou?

Qualities the most diverse, the most complex, the most opposed in appearance, enter into the composition of souls. The contraries do not exclude; far from that, they complete each other. More than one prophet contains a scholiast; more than one magian is a philologist. Inspiration knows its own trade. Every poet is a critic; witness that excellent piece of criticism on the theatre that Shakespeare puts in the mouth of Hamlet. A visionary mind may be at the same time precise; like Dante, who writes a book on rhetoric, and a grammar. A precise mind may be at the same time visionary; like Newton, who comments on the Apocalypse; like Leibnitz, who demonstrates, *nova inventa logica*, the Holy Trinity. Dante knows the distinction between the three sorts of words, *parola piana, parola sdrucciola, parola tronca;* he knows that the piana gives a trochee, the *sdrucciola* a dactyl, and the tronca an iambus. Newton is perfectly sure that the Pope is the Antichrist. Dante combines and calculates; Newton dreams.

No law is to be grasped in that obscurity. No system is possible. The currents of adhesions and of cohesions cross each other pell-mell. At times one imagines that he detects the phenomenon of the transmission of the idea, and fancies that he distinctly sees a hand taking the light from him who is departing, to give it to him who arrives. 1642, for example, is a

strange year. Galileo dies, Newton is born in that year. Good. It is a thread; try and tie it, it breaks at once. Here is a disappearance: on the 23rd of April, 1616, on the same day, almost at the same minute, Shakespeare and Cervantes die. Why are these two flames extinguished at the same moment? No apparent logic. A whirlwind in the night.

Enigmas constantly. Why does Commodus proceed from Marcus Aurelius?

These problems beset in the desert Jerome, that man of the caves, that Isaiah of the New Testament; he interrupted his deep thoughts on eternity, and his attention to the trumpet of the archangel, in order to meditate on the soul of some Pagan in which he felt interested: he calculated the age of Persius, connecting that research with some obscure chance of possible salvation for that poet, dear to the cenobite on account of his strictness; and nothing is so surprising as to see this wild thinker, half naked on his straw, like Job, dispute on this question, so frivolous in appearance, of the birth of a man, with Rufinus and Theophilus of Alexandria—Rufinus observing to him that he is mistaken in his calculations, and that Persius having been born in December under the consulship of Fabius Persicus and Vitellius, and having died in November, under the consulship of Publius Marius and Asinius Gallus, these periods do not correspond rigorously with the year II. of the two hundred and third Olympiad, and the year II. of the two hundred and tenth, the dates fixed by Jerome. The mystery thus attracts deep thinkers.

These calculations, almost wild, of Jerome, or other similar ones, are made by more than one dreamer. Never to find a stop, to pass from one spiral to another like Archimedes, and from one zone to another like Alighieri, to fall, whilst fluttering about in the circular well, is the eternal lot of the dreamer. He strikes against the hard wall on which the pale ray

glides. Sometimes certainty comes to him as an obstacle, and sometimes clearness as a fear. He keeps on his way. He is the bird under the vault. It is terrible. No matter, the dreamer goes on.

To dream is to think here and there. *Passim.* What means the birth of Euripides during that battle of Salamis where Sophocles, a youth, prays, and where Æschylus, in his manhood, fights? What means the birth of Alexander in the night which saw the burning of the temple of Ephesus? What tie between that temple and that man? Is it the conquering and radiant spirit of Europe which, destroyed under the form of the *chef-d'œuvre,* revives under the form of the hero? For do not forget that Ctesiphon is the Greek architect of the temple of Ephesus. We have mentioned just now the simultaneous disappearance of Shakespeare and Cervantes. Here is another case not less surprising. The day when Diogenes died at Corinth, Alexander died at Babylon. These two cynics, the one of the tub, the other of the sword, depart together, and Diogenes, longing to enjoy the immense unknown radiance, will again say to Alexander, "Move away from my sun."

What is the meaning of certain harmonies in the myths represented by divine men? What is this analogy between Hercules and Jesus which struck the Fathers of the Church, which made Sorel indignant, but edified Duperron, and which makes Alcides a kind of material mirror of Christ? Is there not a community of souls, and, unknown to them, a communication between the Greek legislator and the Hebrew legislator, creating at the same moment, without knowing each other, and without their suspecting the existence of one another, the first the Areopagus, the second the Sanhedrim? Strange resemblance between the jubilee of Moses and the jubilee of Lycurgus! What are these double paternities—paternity of the

body, paternity of the soul, like that of David for Solomon? Giddy heights—steeps—precipices.

He who looks too long into this sacred horror feels immensity racking his brain. What does the sounding-line give you when thrown into that mystery? What do you see? Conjectures quiver, doctrines shake, hypotheses float; all the human philosophy vacillates before the mournful blast rising from that chasm.

The expanse of the possible is, so to speak, under your eyes. The dream that you have in yourself, you discover it beyond yourself. All is indistinct. Confused white shadows are moving. Are they souls? One catches, in the depths below, a glimpse of vague archangels passing along; will they be men at some future day? Holding your head between your hands, you strive to see and to know. You are at the window looking into the unknown. On all sides the deep layers of effects and causes, heaped one behind the other, wrap you with mist. The man who meditates not lives in blindness, the man who meditates lives in darkness. The choice between darkness and darkness, that is all we have. In that darkness, which is up to the present time nearly all our science, experience gropes, observation lies in wait, supposition moves about. If you gaze at it very often, you become *vates*. Vast religious meditation takes possession of you.

Every man has in him his Patmos. He is free to go or not to go on that frightful promontory of thought from which darkness is seen. If he goes not, he remains in the common life, with the common conscience, with the common virtue, with the common faith, or with the common doubt; and it is well. For the inward peace it is evidently the best. If he ascends to that peak, he is caught. The profound waves of the marvellous have appeared to him. No one sees with impunity that ocean. Henceforth he will be the thinker enlarged, magnified, but floating;

that is to say, the dreamer. He will partake of the poet and of the prophet. A certain quantity of him now belongs to darkness. The boundless enters into his life, into his conscience, into his virtue, into his philosophy. He becomes extraordinary in the eyes of other men, for his measure is different from theirs. He has duties which they have not. He lives in a sort of vague prayer, catching, strange indeed, at an indefinite certainty which he calls God. He distinguishes in that twilight enough of the anterior life and enough of the ulterior life to seize these two ends of the dark thread, and with them to tie up his soul again. Who has drunk will drink, who has dreamed will dream. He will not give up that alluring abyss, that sounding of the fathomless, that indifference for the world and for life, that entrance into the forbidden, that effort to handle the impalpable and to see the invisible; he returns to them, he leans and bends over them, he takes one step forward, then two, and thus it is that one penetrates into the impenetrable, and thus it is that one plunges into the boundless chasms of infinite meditation.

He who walks down them is a Kant; he who falls down them is a Swedenborg.

To keep one's own free will in that dilatation, is to be great. But, however great one may be, the problems cannot be solved. One may ply the fathomless with questions. Nothing more. As for the answers, they are there, but mingled with shadows. The huge lineaments of truth seem at times to appear for one moment, then go back, and are lost in the absolute. Of all those questions, that among them all which besets the intellect, that among them all which rends the heart, is the question of the soul.

Does the soul exist? question the first. The persistency of the self is the thirst of man. Without the persistent self, all creation is for him but an immense *cui bono!* Listen to the astounding affirmation which

bursts forth from all consciences. The whole sum of God that there is on the earth, within all men, condenses itself in a single cry, to affirm the soul. And then, question the second, Are there great souls?

It seems impossible to doubt it. Why not great minds in humanity as well as great trees in the forest, as well as great peaks in the horizon? The great souls are seen as well as the great mountains. Then, they exist. But, here the interrogation presses further; interrogation is anxiety: Whence come they? What are they? Who are they? Are these atoms more divine than others? This atom, for instance, which shall be endowed with irradiation here below, this one which shall be Thales, this one Æschylus, this one Plato, this one Ezekiel, this one Macchabœus, this one Apollonius of Tyana, this one Tertullian, this one Epictetus, this one Marcus Aurelius, this one Nestorius, this one Pelagius, this one Gama, this one Copernicus, this one Jean Huss, this one Descartes, this one Vincent de Paul, this one Piranesi, this one Washington, this one Beethoven, this one Garibaldi, this one John Brown, all these atoms, souls having a sublime function among men, have they seen other worlds, and do they bring on earth the essence of those worlds? The master souls, the leading intellects, who sends them? who determines their appearance? who is judge of the actual want of humanity? who chooses the souls? who musters the atoms? who ordains the departures? who premeditates the arrivals? Does the atom conjunction, the atom universal, the atom binder of worlds, exist? Is not that the great soul?

To complete one universe by the other, to pour upon the too little of the one the too much of the other, to increase here liberty, there science, there the ideal, to communicate to the inferiors patterns of superior beauty, to exchange the effluvia, to bring the

central fire to the planet, to harmonize the various worlds of the same system, to urge forward those which are behind, to mix the creations—does not that mysterious function exist?

Is it not fulfilled, unknown to them, by certain elects, who, momentarily and during their earthly transit, partly ignore themselves? Is not the function of such or such atom, divine motive power called soul, to give movement to a solar man among earthly men? Since the floral atom exists, why should not the stellary atom exist? That solar man will be, in turn, the savant, the seer, the calculator, the thaumaturge, the navigator, the architect, the magian, the legislator, the philosopher, the prophet, the hero, the poet. The life of humanity will move onward through them. The volutation of civilization will be their task—that team of minds will drag the huge chariot. One being unyoked, the others will start again. Each completion of a century will be one stage on the journey. Never any solution of continuity. That which one mind will begin, another mind will finish, soldering phenomenon to phenomenon, sometimes without suspecting that welding process. To each revolution in the fact will correspond an adequate revolution in the ideas, and reciprocally. The horizon will not be allowed to extend to the right without stretching as much to the left. Men the most diverse, the most opposite, sometimes will adhere by unexpected parts, and in these adherences will burst forth the imperious logic of progress. Orpheus, Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Moses, Manou, Mahomet, with many more, will be the links of the same chain. A Gutenberg discovering the method for the sowing of civilization and the means for the ubiquity of thought, will be followed by a Christopher Columbus discovering a new field. A Christopher Columbus discovering a world will be followed by a Luther discovering a liberty. After Luther, innovator

in the dogma, will come Shakespeare, innovator in art. One genius completes the other.

But not in the same region. The astronomer follows the philosopher: the legislator is the executor of the poet's wishes: the fighting liberator lends his assistance to the thinking liberator; the poet corroborates the statesman. Newton is the appendix to Bacon: Danton originates from Diderot; Milton confirms Cromwell: Byron supports Botzaris; Æschylus, before him, has assisted Miltiades. The work is mysterious even for the very men who perform it. Some are conscious of it, others not. At great distances, at intervals of centuries, the correlations manifest themselves, wonderful: the modification in human manners, begun by the religious revealer, will be completed by the philosophical reasoner, so that Voltaire follows up Jesus. Their work agrees and coincides. If this concordance rested with them, both would resist, perhaps—the one, the divine man, indignant in his martyrdom, the other, the human man, humiliated in his irony: but that is so. Some one who is very high orders it in that way.

Yes, let us meditate on these vast obscurities. The characteristic of reverie is to gaze at darkness so intently that it brings light out of it.

Humanity developing itself from the interior to the exterior is, properly speaking, civilization. Human intelligence becomes radiance, and step by step, wins, conquers and humanizes matter. Sublime domestication. This labour has phases; and each of these phases, marking an age in progress, is opened or closed by one of those beings called geniuses. These missionary spirits, these legates of God, do they not carry in them a sort of partial solution of this question, so abstruse, of free will? The apostolate, being an act of will, is related on one side to liberty, and on the other, being a mission, is related by predestination to fatality. The voluntary necessary. Such is the Messiah; such is Genius.

Now let us return—for all questions which append to mystery form the circle, and one cannot get out of it—let us return to our starting-point, and to our first question: What is a genius? Is it not perchance a cosmic soul?—a soul imbued with a ray from the unknown? In what depths are such souls prepared? How long do they wait? What medium do they traverse? What is the germination which precedes the hatching? What is the mystery of the ante-birth? Where was this atom? It seems as if it was the point of intersection of all the forces. How come all the powers to converge and tie themselves into an indivisible unity in this sovereign intelligence? Who has bred this eagle? The incubation of the fathomless on genius, what an enigma! These lofty souls, momentarily belonging to earth, have they not seen something else? Is it for that reason that they arrive here with so many intuitions? Some of them seem full of the dream of a previous world. Is it thence that comes to them the scared wildness that they sometimes have? Is it that which inspires them with wonderful words? Is it that which gives them strange agitations? Is it thence that they derive the hallucination which makes them, so to speak, see and touch imaginary things and beings? Moses had his fiery thicket; Socrates his familiar demon; Mahomet his dove; Luther his goblin playing with his pen, and to whom he would say, "Be still, there!" Pascal his gaping chasm that he hid with a screen.

Many of those majestic souls are evidently conscious of a mission. They act at times as if they knew. They seem to have a confused certainty. They have it. They have it for the mysterious *ensemble*. They have it also for the detail. Jean Huss dying predicts Luther. He exclaims, "You burn the goose (Huss), but the swan will come." Who sends these souls? Who creates them? What is the law of their formation anterior and superior to life? Who pro-

vides them with force, patience, fecundation, will, passion? From what urn of goodness have they drawn sternness? In what region of the lightnings have they culled love? Each of these great newly-arrived souls renews philosophy, or art, or science, or poetry, and re-makes these worlds after its own image. They are as though impregnated with creation. At times a truth emanates from these souls which lights up the questions on which it falls. Some of these souls are like a star from which light would drip. From what wonderful source, then, do they proceed, that they are all different? Not one originates from the other, and yet they have this in common, that they all bring the infinite. Incommensurable and insoluble questions. That does not stop the good pedants and the clever men from bridling up, and saying, whilst pointing with the finger at the sidereal group of geniuses on the heights of civilization: "You will have no more men such as those. They cannot be matched. There are no more of them. We declare to you that the earth has exhausted its contingent of master spirits. Now for decadence and general closing. We must make up our minds to it. We shall have no more men of genius."—Ah! you have seen the bottom of the unfathomable, you!

CHAPTER II.

No, thou art not worn out. Thou hast not before thee the bourn, the limit, the term, the frontier. Thou hast nothing to bound thee, as winter bounds summer, as lassitude the birds, as the precipice the torrent, as the cliff the ocean, as the tomb man. Thou art boundless. The "thou shalt not go farther," is spoken by thee, and it is not said of thee. No, thou windest not a skein which diminishes, and the thread of which breaks. No, thou stoppest not short. No, thy quantity decreaseth not; no, thy thickness becometh not thinner; no, thy faculty miscarrieth not; no, it is not true that they begin to perceive in thy all-powerfulness, that transparence which announces the end, and to get a glimpse behind thee of another thing besides thee. Another thing! and what then?—the obstacle. The obstacle to whom?—the obstacle to creation! the obstacle to the everlasting! the obstacle to the necessary! What a dream!

When thou hearest men say, "This is how far God advances. Do not ask more of him. He starts from here, and stops there. In Homer, in Aristotle, in Newton, he has given you all that he had. Leave him at rest now. He is empty. God does not begin again. He could do that once, he cannot do it twice. He has spent himself altogether in this man; enough of God does not remain to make a similar man." When thou hearest them say such things, if thou wast a man like them, thou wouldst smile in thy terrible depth; but thou art not in a terrible depth, and

being goodness, thou hast no smile. The smile is but a passing wrinkle, unknown to the absolute.

Thou struck by a powerless chill; thou to leave off; thou to break down; thou to say "Halt!" Never. Thou shouldst be compelled to take breath after having created a man! No, whoever that man may be, thou art God. If this weak swarm of living beings, in presence of the unknown, must feel wonder and fear at something, it is not at the possibility of seeing the germ-seed dry up and the power of procreation become sterile; it is, O God, at the eternal run of miracles. The hurricane of miracles blows perpetually. Day and night the phenomena surge around us on all sides, and, not less marvellous, without disturbing the majestic tranquillity of the Being. This tumult is harmony.

The huge concentric waves of universal life are boundless. The starry sky that we study is but a partial apparition. We steal from the network of the Being but some links. The complication of the phenomenon, of which a glimpse can be caught, beyond our senses, only by contemplation and ecstasy, makes the mind giddy. The thinker who reaches so far, is, for other men, only a visionary. The necessary entanglement of the perceptible and of the imperceptible strikes the philosopher with stupor. This plenitude is required by thy all-powerfulness, which does not admit any blank. The permeation of universes into universes makes part of thy infinitude. Here we extend the word universe to an order of facts that no astronomer can reach. In the Cosmos that the vision spies and which escapes our organs of flesh, the spheres enter into the spheres without deforming each other, the density of creations being different; so that, according to every appearance, with our world is amalgamated, in some inexplicable way, another world invisible to us, as we are invisible to it.

And thou, centre and place of all things, thou, the Being, thou couldst be exhausted! The absolute serenities could, at certain moments, fear the want of means on the part of the Infinite! The lights which humanity requires, there would come an hour when thou couldst no longer supply it with them! Mechanically unwearied, thou couldst be worn out in the intellectual and moral order! It would be proper to say, "God is extinguished on this side!" No! no! no! O Father!

Phidias created does not stop you from making Michael Angelo. Michael Angelo completed, there still remains to thee the material for Rembrandt. A Dante does not tire thee. Thou art no more exhausted by a Homer than by a star. The auroras by the side of auroras, the indefinite renewing of meteors, the worlds above the worlds, the wonderful passage of these incandescent stars called comets, the geniuses and again the geniuses, Orpheus, then Moses, then Isaiah, then Æschylus, then Lucretius, then Tacitus, then Juvenal, then Cervantes and Rabelais, then Shakespeare, then Molière, then Voltaire, those who have been and those who will be, that does not weary thee. Swarm of Constellations! there is room in thy immensity.

PART II.

BOOK I.

SHAKESPEARE—HIS GENIUS.

CHAPTER I.

"SHAKESPEARE," says Forbes, "had neither the tragic talent nor the comic talent. His tragedy is artificial, and his comedy is but instinctive." Johnson confirms the verdict—"His tragedy is the result of industry, and his comedy the result of instinct." After Forbes and Johnson had contested his claim to drama, Green contested his claim to originality. Shakespeare is "a plagiarist;" Shakespeare is "a copyist;" Shakespeare "has invented nothing;" he is "a crow adorned with the plumes of others;" he pilfers Æschylus, Boccaccio, Bandello, Holinshed, Belleforest, Benoist de St. Maur; he pilfers Layamon, Robert of Gloucester, Robert of Wace, Peter of Langtoft, Robert Manning, John de Mandeville, Sackville, Spenser; he steals the "Arcadia" of Sidney; he steals the anonymous work called the "True Chronicle of King Leir;" he steals from Rowley, in "The Troublesome Reign of King John" (1591), the character of the bastard Faulconbridge. Shakespeare pilfers Thomas Greene; Shakespeare pilfers Dekker and Chettle. Hamlet is not his; Othello is not his; Timon of Athens is not his; nothing is his. As for Green, Shakespeare is for him not only "a blower of blank verses," a "Shake-scene," a Johannes factotum

(allusion to his former position as call-boy and supernumerary); Shakespeare is a wild beast. Crow no longer suffices. Shakespeare is promoted to a tiger. Here is the text, "Tyger's heart wrapt in a player's hyde."*

Thomas Rhymer judges "Othello:" "The moral of this story is certainly very instructive. It is a warning to good housewives to look after their linen." Then the same Rhymer condescends to give up joking, and to take Shakespeare in earnest—"What edifying and useful impression can the audience receive from such poetry? To what can this poetry serve, unless it is to mislead our good sense, to throw our thoughts into disorder, to trouble our brain, to pervert our instincts, to crack our imaginations, to corrupt our taste, and to fill our heads with vanity, confusion, clatter, and nonsense?" This was printed eighty years after the death of Shakespeare, in 1693. All the critics and all the connoisseurs were of one opinion.

Here are some of the reproaches unanimously addressed to Shakespeare:—Conceits, play on words, puns.—Improbability, extravagance, absurdity.—Obscenity.—Puerility.—Bombast, emphasis, exaggeration.—False glitter, pathos.—Far-fetched ideas, affected style.—Abuse of contrast and metaphor.—Subtilty.—Immorality.—Writing for the mob.—Pandering to the *canaille*.—Delighting in the horrible.—Want of grace.—Want of charm.—Overreaching his aim.—Having too much wit.—Having no wit.—Overdoing his works.

"This Shakespeare is a coarse and savage mind," says Lord Shaftesbury. Dryden adds, "Shakespeare is unintelligible." Mrs. Lennox gives Shakespeare this slap, "This poet alters historical truth." A German critic of 1680, Bentheim, feels himself disarmed, because, says he, "Shakespeare is a mind full

* "A Groatsworth of Wit," 1592.

of drollery." Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's *protégé*, relates this (ix., 175, Gifford's edition): "I recollect that the comedians mentioned to the honour of Shakespeare, that in his writings he never erased a line. I answered, 'Would to God he had erased a thousand.'" This wish, moreover, was granted by the worthy publishers of 1623, Blount and Jaggard. They struck out of "Hamlet" alone two hundred lines; they cut out two hundred and twenty lines of "King Lear." Garrick played at Drury Lane only the "King Lear" of Nahum Tate. Listen again to Rhymer: "'Othello' is a sanguinary farce without wit." Johnson adds, "'Julius Cæsar,' a cold tragedy, and lacking the power to move the public." "I think," says Warburton, in a letter to the Dean of St. Asaph, "that Swift has much more wit than Shakespeare, and that the comic in Shakespeare, altogether low as it is, is very inferior to the comic in Shadwell." As for the witches in "Macbeth," "nothing equals," says that critic of the seventeenth century, Forbes, repeated by a critic of the nineteenth, "the absurdity of such a spectacle." Samuel Foote, the author of the "Young Hypocrite," makes this declaration: "The comic in Shakespeare is too heavy, and does not make one laugh. It is buffoonery without wit." At last, Pope, in 1725, finds a reason why Shakespeare wrote his dramas, and exclaims, "One must eat!".

After these words of Pope, one cannot understand with what object Voltaire, aghast about Shakespeare, writes: "Shakespeare, whom the English take for a Sophocles, flourished about the time of Lopez (Lope, if you please, Voltaire) de Vega." Voltaire adds, "You are not ignorant that in 'Hamlet' the diggers prepare a grave, drinking, singing ballads, and cracking over the heads of dead people the jokes usual to men of their profession." And, concluding, he qualifies thus the whole scene—"these follies." He characterizes Shakespeare's pieces by this word,

"monstrous farces called tragedies," and completes the judgment by declaring that Shakespeare "has ruined the English theatre."

Marmontel comes to see Voltaire at Ferney. Voltaire was in bed, holding a book in his hand; all at once he rises up, throws the book away, stretches his thin legs across the bed, and cries to Marmontel, "Your Shakespeare is a barbarian!" "He is not my Shakespeare at all," replies Marmontel.

Shakespeare was an occasion for Voltaire to show his skill at the target. Voltaire missed him rarely. Voltaire shot at Shakespeare as the peasants shoot at the goose. It was Voltaire who had commenced in France the attack against that barbarian. He nicknamed him the "St. Christopher of Tragic Poets." He said to Madame de Graffigny, "Shakespeare pour rire." He said to Cardinal de Bernis, "Compose pretty verses, deliver us, monsignor, from plagues, witches, the school of the King of Prussia, the Bull Unigenitus, the constitutionalists and the convulsionists, and from that ninny Shakespeare! *Libera nos, Domine.*" The attitude of Fréron towards Voltaire has, in the eyes of posterity, as an attenuating circumstance, the attitude of Voltaire towards Shakespeare. Nevertheless, throughout the eighteenth century, Voltaire gives the law. The moment that Voltaire sneers at Shakespeare, Englishmen of wit, such as my Lord Marshal, follow suit. Johnson confesses the ignorance and vulgarity of Shakespeare. Frederic II. comes in for a word also. He writes to Voltaire *à propos* of Julius Cæsar: "You have done well in re-casting, according to principles, the crude piece of that Englishman." Behold, then, where Shakespeare is in the last century. Voltaire insults him. La Harpe protects him: "Shakespeare himself, coarse as he was, was not without reading and knowledge."*

* La Harpe: "Introduction au Cours de Littérature."

In our days, the class of critics of whom we have just seen some samples, have not lost courage. Coleridge speaks of "Measure for Measure:" "a painful comedy," he hints. "Revolting," says Mr. Knight. "Disgusting," responds Mr. Hunter.

In 1804, the author of one of those idiotic *Biographies Universelles*, in which they contrive to relate the history of Calas without pronouncing the name of Voltaire, and to which governments, knowing what they are about, grant readily their patronage and subsidies, a certain Delandine feels himself called upon to be a judge, and to pass sentence on Shakespeare; and after having said that "Shakespear, which is pronounced Chekspir," had, in his youth, "stolen the deer of a nobleman," he adds—"Nature had brought together in the head of this poet the highest greatness we can imagine, with the lowest coarseness, without wit." Lately, we read the following words, written a short time ago by an eminent dolt who is living: "Second-rate authors and inferior poets, such as Shakespeare," &c.

CHAPTER II.

A POET must at the same time, and necessarily, be an historian and a philosopher. Herodotus and Thales are included in Homer. Shakespeare, likewise, is this triple man. He is, besides, the painter, and what a painter!—the colossal painter. The poet in reality does more than relate, he exhibits. Poets have in them a reflector, observation, and a condenser, emotion: thence those grand luminous spectres which burst out from their brain, and which go on blazing for ever on the gloomy human wall. These phantoms have life. To exist as much as Achilles, would be the ambition of Alexander. Shakespeare has tragedy, comedy, fairy land, hymn, farce, grand divine laughter, terror and horror, and, to say all in one word, the drama. He touches the two poles. He belongs to Olympus and to the travelling booth. No possibility fails him.

When he grasps you, you are subdued. Do not expect from him any pity. His cruelty is pathetic. He shows you a mother, Constance, mother of Arthur, and when he has brought you to that point of tenderness that your heart is as her heart, he kills her child: he goes farther in horror even than history, which is difficult; he does not content himself with killing Rutland and driving York to despair; he dips in the blood of the son the handkerchief with which he wipes the eyes of the father. He causes elegy to be choked by the drama, Desdemona by Othello. No attenuation in anguish. Genius is inexorable. It has its law and follows it. The mind also has its in-

clined planes, and these slopes determine its direction. Shakespeare glides towards the terrible. Shakespeare, Æschylus, Dante, are great streams of human emotion shedding from the depth of their cave the urn of tears.

The poet is only limited by his aim; he considers nothing but the idea to be worked out; he does not recognise any other sovereignty, any other necessity but the idea; for, art emanating from the absolute, in art, as in the absolute, the end justifies the means. This is, it may be said parenthetically, one of those deviations from the ordinary terrestrial law which make lofty criticism muse and reflect, and which reveal to it the mysterious side of art. In art, above all, is visible the *quid divinum*. The poet moves in his work as providence in its own; he excites, astounds, strikes, then exalts or depresses, often in inverse ratio to what you expected, diving into your soul through surprise. Now consider. Art has, like the infinite, a Because superior to all the Why's. Go and ask the wherefore of a tempest from the ocean, that great lyric. What seems to you odious or absurd has an inner reason for existing. Ask of Job why he scrapes the pus on his ulcer with a bit of glass, and of Dante why he sews with a thread of iron the eyelids of the larvas in purgatory, making the stitches trickle with fearful tears!* Job continues to clean his sore with his broken glass and wipes it on his dungheap, and Dante goes on his way. The same with Shakespeare.

His sovereign horrors reign and force themselves upon you. He mingles with them, when he chooses, the charm, that august charm of the powerful, as superior to feeble sweetness, to slender attraction, to the charm of Ovid or of Tibullus, as the Venus of

* And as the sun does not reach the blind, so the spirits of which I was just speaking have not the gift of heavenly light. An iron wire pierces and fastens together their eyelids, as it is done to the wild hawk in order to tame it. ("Purgatory," chap. xiii.)

Milo to the Venus de Medici. The things of the unknown, the unfathomable metaphysical problems, the enigmas of the soul and of nature, which is also a soul: the far-off intuitions of the eventual included in destiny, the amalgams of thought and event, can be translated into delicate figures, and fill poetry with mysterious and exquisite types, the more delightful that they are rather sorrowful, somewhat invisible, and at the same time very real, anxious concerning the shadow which is behind them, and yet trying to please you. Profound grace does exist.

Prettiness combined with greatness is possible; it is found in Homer. Astyanax is a type of it; but the profound grace of which we speak is something more than this epic delicacy. It is linked to a certain amount of agitation, and means the infinite without expressing it. It is a kind of light and shade radiance. The modern men of genius alone have that depth in the smile which shows elegance and depth at the same time.

Shakespeare professes this grace, which is the very opposite to the unhealthy grace, although it resembles it, emanating as it does likewise from the grave.

Sorrow, the great sorrow of the drama, which is nothing else but human constitution carried into art, envelopes this grace and this horror.

Hamlet, doubt, is at the centre of his work, and at the two extremities, love; Romeo and Othello, all the heart. There is light in the folds of the shroud of Juliet; but nothing but darkness in the winding-sheet of Ophelia disdained and of Desdemona suspected. These two innocents, to whom love has broken faith, cannot be consoled. Desdemona sings the song of the willow under which the water bears Ophelia away. They are sisters without knowing each other, and kindred souls, although each has her separate drama. The willow trembles over them both. In the mysterious chant of the calumniated

who is about to die, floats the dishevelled shadow of the drowned one.

Shakespeare in philosophy goes at times deeper than Homer. Beyond Priam there is Lear; to weep at ingratitude is worse than weeping at death. Homer meets envy and strikes it with the sceptre, Shakespeare gives the sceptre to the envious, and out of Thersites creates Richard III. Envy is exposed in its nakedness all the better for being clothed in purple; its reason for existing is then visibly altogether in itself; envy on the throne, what more striking!

Deformity in the person of the tyrant is not enough for this philosopher; he must have it also in the shape of the valet, and he creates Falstaff. The dynasty of common sense, inaugurated in Panurge, continued in Sancho Panza, goes wrong and miscarries in Falstaff. The rock which this wisdom splits upon is, in reality, lowness. Sancho Panza, in combination with the ass, is embodied with ignorance; Falstaff—glutton, poltroon, savage, obscene, human face and stomach, with the lower parts of the brute—walks on the four feet of turpitude; Falstaff is the centaur man and pig.

Shakespeare is, above all, an imagination. Now—and this is a truth to which we have already alluded, and which is well known to thinkers—imagination is depth. No faculty of the mind goes and sinks deeper than imagination; it is the great diver. Science, reaching the lowest depths, meets imagination. In conic sections, in logarithms, in the differential and integral calculus, in the calculation of probabilities, in the infinitesimal calculus, in the calculations of sonorous waves, in the application of algebra to geometry, the imagination is the co-efficient of calculation, and mathematics becomes poetry. I have no faith in the science of stupid learned men.

The poet philosophizes because he imagines. That is why Shakespeare has that sovereign management of reality which enables him to have his way with it;

and his very whims are varieties of the true—varieties which deserve meditation. Does not destiny resemble a constant whim? Nothing more incoherent in appearance, nothing less connected, nothing worse as deduction. Why crown this monster, John? Why kill that child, Arthur? Why have Joan of Arc burnt? Why Monk triumphant? Why Louis XV. happy? Why Louis XVI. punished? Let the logic of God pass. It is from that logic that the fancy of the poet is drawn. Comedy bursts forth in the midst of tears; the sob rises out of laughter; figures mingle and clash; massive forms, nearly animals, pass clumsily; larvas—women perhaps, perhaps smoke—float about; souls, libellulas of darkness, flies of the twilight, quiver among all these black reeds that we call passions and events. At one pole Lady Macbeth, at the other Titania. A colossal thought, and an immense caprice.

What are the "Tempest," "Troilus and Cressida," "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," "The Merry Wives of Windsor," the "Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Winter's Tale?" They are fancy—arabesque work. The arabesque in art is the same phenomenon as vegetation in nature. The arabesque grows, increases, knots, exfoliates, multiplies, becomes green, blooms, branches, and creeps around every dream. The arabesque is endless; it has a strange power of extension and aggrandizement; it fills horizons, and opens up others; it intercepts the luminous deeds by innumerable intersections; and, if you mix the human figure with these entangled branches, the *ensemble* makes you giddy; it is striking. Behind the arabesque, and through its openings, all philosophy can be seen; vegetation lives; man becomes pantheist; a combination of infinite takes place in the finite; and before such work, in which are found the impossible and the true, the human soul trembles with an emotion obscure and yet supreme.

For all this, the edifice ought not to be overrun by vegetation, nor the drama by arabesque.

One of the characteristics of genius is the singular union of faculties the most distant. To draw an astragal like Ariosto, then to dive into souls like Pascal, such is the poet. Man's inner conscience belongs to Shakespeare; he surprises you with it constantly. He extracts from conscience every unforeseen contingence that it contains. Few poets surpass him in this psychical research. Many of the strangest peculiarities of the human mind are indicated by him. He skilfully makes us feel the simplicity of the metaphysical fact under the complication of the dramatic fact. That which the human creature does not acknowledge inwardly—the obscure thing that he begins by fearing, and ends by desiring—such is the point of junction and the strange place of meeting for the heart of virgins and the heart of murderers—for the soul of Juliet and the soul of Macbeth; the innocent fears and longs for love, just as the wicked one for ambition. Perilous kisses given on the sly to the phantom—smiling here, fierce there.

To all these prodigalities, analysis, synthesis, creation in flesh and bone, reverie, fancy, science, metaphysics, add history—here the history of historians, there the history of the tale; specimens of everything—of the traitor, from Macbeth the assassin of his guest, up to Coriolanus, the assassin of his country; of the despot, from the intellectual tyrant Cæsar, to the bestial tyrant Henry VIII.; of the carnivorous, from the lion down to the usurer. One may say to Shylock, "Well bitten, Jew!" And, in the background of this wonderful drama, on the desert heath, in the twilight, in order to promise crowns to murderers, three black outlines appear, in which Hesiod, through the vista of ages, perhaps recognises the Parcæ. Inordinate force, exquisite charm, epic ferocity, pity, creative faculty, gaiety—that lofty gaiety unintelligible to

narrow understandings, sarcasm, the cutting lash for the wicked, star-like greatness, microscopic tenuity, boundless poetry, which has a zenith and a nadir; the *ensemble* vast, the detail profound, nothing is wanting in this mind. One feels, on approaching the work of this man, the powerful wind which would burst forth from the opening of a whole world—the radiancy of genius on every side—that is Shakespeare. *Totus in antithesi*, says Jonathan Forbes.

CHAPTER III.

One of the characteristics which distinguish men of genius from ordinary minds, is that they have a double reflection, just as the carbuncle, according to Jerome Cardan, differs from crystal and glass in having a double refraction.

Genius and carbuncle, double reflection, double refraction; the same phenomenon in the moral and in the physical order.

Does this diamond of diamonds, the carbuncle, exist? It is a question. Alchemy says yes, chemistry searches. As for genius, it exists. It is sufficient to read one verse of Æschylus or Juvenal in order to find this carbuncle of the human brain.

This phenomenon of double reflection raises to the highest power in men of genius what rhetoricians call antithesis, that is to say, the sovereign faculty of seeing the two sides of things.

I dislike Ovid, that proscribed coward, that licker of bloody hands, that fawning cur of exile, that far-away flatterer disdained by the tyrant, and I hate the "*bel esprit*" of which Ovid is full; but I do not confound that "*bel esprit*" with the powerful antithesis of Shakespeare.

Complete minds having everything, Shakespeare contains Gongora as Michael Angelo contains Bernini; and there are on that subject ready-made sentences—"Michael Angelo is a mannerist, Shakespeare is antithetical." These are the formulas of the school; but it is the great question of contrast in art seen by the small side.

Totus in antithesi. Shakespeare is all in antithesis.

Certainly, it is not very just to see all the man, and such a man, in one of his qualities. But, this reserve being made, let us observe that this saying, *Tbtus in antithesi*, which pretends to be a criticism, might be simply a statement. Shakespeare, in fact, has deserved, like all truly great poets, this praise, to be like creation. What is creation? Good and evil, joy and sorrow, man and woman, roar and song, eagle and vulture, lightning and ray, bee and drone, mountain and valley, love and hate, the medal and its reverse, beauty and ugliness, star and swine, high and low. Nature is the Eternal bifronted. And this antithesis, whence comes the antiphrasis, is found in all the habits of man; it is in fable, in history, in philosophy, in language. Are you the Furies, they call you Eumenides, the Charming; do you kill your brothers, you are called Philadelphus; kill your father, they will call you Philopator; be a great general, they will call you "*le petit caporal.*" The antithesis of Shakespeare is universal antithesis, always and everywhere; it is the ubiquity of antinomy; life and death, cold and heat, just and unjust, angel and demon, heaven and earth, flower and lightning, melody and harmony, spirit and flesh, high and low, ocean and envy, foam and slaver, hurricane and whistle, self and not-self, the objective and the subjective, marvel and miracle, type and monster, soul and shadow. It is from this sombre palpable difference, from this endless ebb and flow, from this perpetual yes and no, from this irreducible opposition, from this immense antagonism ever existing, that Rembrandt obtains his chiaroscuro and Piranesi his vertiginous height.

Before removing this antithesis from art, commence by removing it from nature.

CHAPTER IV.

"He is reserved and discreet. You may trust him; he will take no advantage. He has, above all, a very rare quality; he is sober."

What is this?—a recommendation for a domestic? No. It is the panegyric of a writer. A certain school, called "serious," has in our days hoisted this programme of poetry: sobriety. It seems that the only question should be to preserve literature from indigestion. Formerly, the motto was, "Prolificness and power;" to-day it is "tisane." You are in the resplendent garden of the Muses, where those divine blossoms of the mind that the Greeks called Tropes blow in riot and luxuriance on every branch; everywhere the ideal image, everywhere the thought-flower, everywhere fruits, metaphors, golden apples, perfumes, colours, rays, strophes, wonders; touch nothing, be discreet. Whoever gathers nothing there proves himself a true poet. Be of the temperance society. A good critical book is a treatise on the dangers of drinking. Do you wish to compose the Iliad, put yourself on diet. Ah! thou mayest well open thy eyes wide, old Rabelais!

Lyricism is heady, the Beautiful intoxicates, greatness inebriates, the ideal causes giddiness; whoever proceeds from it is no longer in his right senses; when you have walked among the stars, you are capable of refusing a prefecture; you are no longer a sensible being; they might offer you a seat in the senate of Domitian and you would refuse it, you no longer give to Cæsar what is due to Cæsar, you have reached that

point of mental alienation that you will not even salute the lord Incitatus, consul and horse. See what is the result of your having drunk in that shocking place, the Empyrean. You become proud, ambitious, disinterested. Now, be sober. It is forbidden to haunt the tavern of the sublime.

Liberty means libertinism. To restrain yourself is well, to geld yourself is better.

Pass your life in restraining yourself.

Sobriety, decency, respect for authority, irreproachable toilet. No poetry unless it is fashionably dressed. An uncombed savannah, a lion which does not pare its nails, an unsifted torrent, the navel of the sea which allows itself to be seen, the cloud which forgets itself so far as to show Aldebaran, oh! shocking. The wave foams on the rock, the cataract vomits into the gulf, Juvenal spits on the tyrant. Fie!

We like not enough better than too much. No exaggeration. Henceforth the rose-tree shall be compelled to count its roses. The prairie shall be requested not to be so prodigal of daisies; the spring shall be ordered to restrain itself. The nests are rather too prolific. The groves are too rich in warblers. The Milky Way must condescend to number its stars; there are a good many.

Take example from the big Mullen Serpentaria of the Botanical Garden, which blooms only every fifty years. That is a flower truly respectable.

A true critic of the sober school is that garden-keeper who, to this question, "Have you any nightingales in your trees?" replied, "Ah! don't mention it; for the whole month of May these ugly beasts have been doing nothing but bark."

M. Suard gave to Marie Joseph Chénier this certificate: "His style has the great merit of not containing comparisons." In our days we have seen that singular eulogium reproduced. This reminds us that a great professor of the Restoration, indignant at the

comparisons and figures which abound in the prophets, put a crusher on Isaiah, Daniel, and Jeremiah, with this profound apophthegm, "The whole Bible is in 'like' (*comme*)." Another, a greater professor still, was the author of this saying, which is still celebrated at the normal school: "I throw Juvenal back to the romantic dunghill." Of what crime was Juvenal guilty? Of the same as Isaiah—namely, of readily expressing the idea by the image. Shall we return, little by little, in the walks of learning, to the metonymy term of chemistry, and to the opinion of Pradon on metaphor?

One would suppose, from the demands and clamours of the doctrinary school, that it has to supply, at its own expense, all the consumption of metaphors and figures that poets can make, and that it feels itself ruined by spendthrifts such as Pindar, Aristophanes, Ezekiel, Plautus, and Cervantes. This school puts under lock and key passions, sentiments, the human heart, reality, the ideal, life. Frightened, it looks at the men of genius, hides from them everything, and says, "How greedy they are!" Therefore it has invented for writers this superlative praise, "He is temperate."

On all these points sacerdotal criticism fraternizes with doctrinal criticism. The prude and the devotee help each other.

A curious bashful fashion tends to prevail; we blush at the coarse manner in which grenadiers meet death; rhetoric has for heroes modest vine-leaves which they call periphrases; it is agreed that the bivouac speaks like the convent, the talk of the guardroom is a calumny; a veteran drops his eyes at the recollection of Waterloo, the Cross of Honour is given to these modest eyes; certain sayings which are in history have no right to be historical, and it is well understood, for example, that the gendarme who fired a

pistol at Robespierre at the Hôtel-de-Ville was called *La-garde-meurt-et-ne-se-rend-pas.*

One salutary reaction is the result of the combined effort of two critics watching over public tranquillity. This reaction has already produced some specimens of poets—steady, well-bred, prudent, whose style always keeps good time; who never indulge in an orgy with all those mad things, ideas; who are never met at the corner of a wood, *solus cum solâ,* with that Bohemian, reverie; who are incapable of havingconnexion either with imagination, a dangerous vagabond, or with inspiration, a Bacchante, or with fancy, a *lorette;* who have never in their life given a kiss to that beggarly chit, the muse; who do not sleep out, and who are honoured with the esteem of their doorkeeper, Nicholas Boileau. If Polymnia goes by with her hair rather flowing, what a scandal! Quick, they call the hairdresser. M. de la Harpe comes hastily. These two sister critics, the doctrinal and the sacerdotal, undertake to educate. They bring up writers from the birth. They keep houses to wean them, a boarding-school for juvenile reputations.

Thence a discipline, a literature, an art. Dress right, fall into line! Society must be saved in literature as well as in politics. Every one knows that poetry is a frivolous insignificant thing, childishly occupied in seeking rhymes, barren, vain; therefore nothing is more formidable. It behoves us to well secure the thinkers. Lie down, dangerous beast! What is a poet? For honour, nothing; for persecution, everything.

This race of writers requires repression. It is useful to have recourse to the secular arm. The means vary. From time to time a good banishment is expedient. The list of exiled writers opens with Æschylus, and does not close with Voltaire. Each century has its link in this chain. But there must be at least a pretext for exile, banishment, and proscription. That

cannot apply to all cases. It is rather unmanageable; it is important to have a lighter weapon for everyday skirmishing. A State criticism duly sworn in and accredited, can render service. To organize the persecution of writers by means of writers is not a bad thing. To entrap the pen by the pen is ingenious. Why not have literary policemen?

Good taste is a precaution taken by good order. Sober writers are the counterpart of prudent electors. Inspiration is suspected of love for liberty. Poetry is rather outside of legality; there is, therefore, an official art, the offspring of official criticism.

A whole special rhetoric proceeds from those premisses. Nature has in that particular art but a narrow entrance, and goes in through the side door. Nature is infected with demagogy. The elements are suppressed as being bad company, and making too much uproar. The equinox is guilty of breaking into reserved grounds; the squall is a nightly row. The other day, at the School of Fine Arts, a pupil-painter having caused the wind to lift up the folds of a mantle during a storm, a local professor, shocked at this lifting up, said, "The style does not admit of wind."

After all, reaction does not despair. We get on; some progress is accomplished. A ticket of confession sometimes gains admittance for its bearer into the Academy. Jules Janin, Théophile Gautier, Paul de Saint-Victor, Littré, Renan, please to recite your creed.

But that does not suffice; the evil is deep-rooted. The ancient catholic society, and the ancient legitimate literature, are threatened. Darkness is in peril. To war with new generations! to war with the modern spirit! and down upon Democracy, the daughter of Philosophy!

Cases of rabidness—that is to say, the works of genius—are to be feared. Hygienic prescriptions are renewed. The public high-road is evidently badly

watched. It appears that there are some poets wandering about. The prefect of police, a negligent man, allows some spirits to rove about. What is Authority thinking of? Let us take care. Intellects can be bitten; there is danger. It is certain, evident. It is rumoured that Shakespeare has been met without a muzzle on.

This Shakespeare without a muzzle is the present translation.*

* "The Complete Works of Shakespeare," translated by François Victor Hugo.

CHAPTER V.

If ever a man was undeserving of the good character of "he is sober," it is most certainly William Shakespeare. Shakespeare is one of the worst rakes that serious æsthetics ever had to lord over.

Shakespeare is fertility, force, exuberance, the overflowing breast, the foaming cup, the brimful tub, the overrunning sap, the overflooding lava, the whirlwind scattering germs, the universal rain of life, everything by thousands, everything by millions, no reticence, no binding, no economy, the inordinate and tranquil prodigality of the creator. To those who feel the bottom of their pocket, the inexhaustible seems insane. Will it stop soon? Never. Shakespeare is the sower of dazzling wonders. At every turn, the image; at every turn, contrast; at every turn, light and darkness.

The poet, we have said, is nature. Subtle, minute, keen, microscopical like nature; immense. Not discreet, not reserved, not sparing. Simply magnificent. Let us explain this word, simple.

Sobriety in poetry is poverty; simplicity is grandeur. To give to each thing the quantity of space which fits it, neither more nor less, is simplicity. Simplicity is justice. The whole law of taste is in that. Each thing put in its place and spoken with its own word. On the only condition that a certain latent equilibrium is maintained and a certain mysterious proportion preserved, simplicity may be found in the most stupendous complication, either in the style, or in the *ensemble*. These are the arcana of great art.

Lofty criticism alone, which takes its starting-point from enthusiasm, penetrates and comprehends these learned laws. Opulence, profusion, dazzling radiancy, may be simplicity. The sun is simple.

Such simplicity does not evidently resemble the simplicity recommended by Le Batteux, the Abbé d'Aubignac and Father Bouhours.

Whatever may be the abundance, whatever may be the entanglement, even if perplexing, confused, and inextricable, all that is true is simple. A root is simple.

That simplicity which is profound, is the only one that art recognises.

Simplicity, being true, is artless. Artlessness is the characteristic of truth. Shakespeare's simplicity is the great simplicity. He is foolishly full of it. He ignores the small simplicity.

The simplicity which is impotence, the simplicity which is meagreness, the simplicity which is short-winded, is a case for pathology. It has nothing to do with poetry. An order for the hospital suits it better than a ride on the hippogriff.

I admit that the hump of Thersites is simple, but the breastplates of Hercules are simple also. I prefer that simplicity to the other.

The simplicity which belongs to poetry may be as bushy as the oak. Does the oak by chance produce on you the effect of a Byzantine and of a refined being? Its innumerable antitheses, gigantic trunk and small leaves, rough bark and velvet mosses, reception of rays and shedding of shade, crowns for heroes and fruit for swine, are they marks of affectation, corruption, subtlety and bad taste? could the oak be too witty? could the oak belong to the hôtel Rambouillet? could the oak be a *précieux ridicule?* could the oak be tainted with Gongorism? could the oak belong to the age of decadence? Is by chance complete simplicity, *sancta simplicitas*, condensed in the cabbage?

Refinement, excess of wit, affectation, Gongorism, that is what they have hurled at Shakespeare's head. They say that those are the faults of littleness, and they hasten to reproach the giant with them.

But then this Shakespeare respects nothing, he goes straight on, putting out of breath those who wish to follow; he strides over proprieties, he overthrows Aristotle, he spreads havoc among the Jesuits, methodists, the purists and the puritans; he puts Loyola to flight and upsets Wesley; he is valiant, bold, enterprising, militant, direct. His inkstand smokes like a crater. He is always laborious, ready, spirited, disposed, going forward. Pen in hand, his brow blazing, he goes on driven by the demon of genius. The stallion abuses; there are he-mules passing by to whom this is offensive. To be prolific is to be aggressive. A poet like Isaiah, like Juvenal, like Shakespeare, is, in truth, exorbitant. By all that is holy! some attention ought to be paid to others, one man has no right to everything; what! always virility, inspiration everywhere, as many metaphors as the prairie, as many antitheses as the oak, as many contrasts and depths as the universe; what! for ever generation, hatching, hymen, parturition, vast *ensemble*, exquisite and robust detail, living communion, fecundation, plenitude, production! It is too much; it infringes the rights of human geldings.

For nearly three centuries Shakespeare, this poet all brimming with virility, has been looked upon by sober critics with that discontented air that certain bereaved spectators must have in the seraglio.

Shakespeare has no reserve, no discretion, no limit, no blank. What is wanting in him is that he wants nothing. No box for savings, no fast-day with him. He overflows like vegetation, like germination, like light, like flame. Yet, it does not hinder him from thinking of you, spectator or reader, from preaching

to you, from giving you advice, from being your friend, like any other kind-hearted La Fontaine, and from rendering you small services. You can warm your hands at the conflagration he kindles.

Othello, Romeo, Iago, Macbeth, Shylock, Richard III., Julius Cæsar, Oberon, Puck, Ophelia, Desdemona, Juliet, Titania, men, women, witches, fairies, souls, Shakespeare is the grand distributor, take, take, take, all of you! Do you want more? Here is Ariel, Parolles, Macduff, Prospero, Viola, Miranda, Caliban. More yet? Here is Jessica, Cordelia, Cressida, Portia, Brabantio, Polonius, Horatio, Mercutio, Imogene, Pandarus of Troy, Bottom, Theseus. *Ecce Deus*, it is the poet, he offers himself, who will have me? he gives, scatters, squanders himself; he is never empty. Why? He cannot be. Exhaustion with him is impossible. There is in him something of the fathomless. He fills up again, and spends himself, then recommences. He is the bottomless tub of genius.

In licence and audacity of language Shakespeare equals Rabelais, whom, a few days ago, a swan-like critic called a swine.

Like all lofty minds in full riot of Omnipotence, Shakespeare decants all nature, drinks it and makes you drink it. Voltaire reproached him for his drunkenness and was quite right. Why on earth, we repeat, why has this Shakespeare such a temperament? He does not stop, he does not feel fatigue, he is without pity for the poor weak stomachs that are candidates for the Academy. The gastritis called "good taste," he does not labour under it. He is powerful. What is this vast intemperate song that he sings through ages, war-song, drinking-song, love-ditty, which passes from King Lear to Queen Mab, and from Hamlet to Falstaff, heart-rending at times as a sob, grand as the Iliad! "I have the lumbago from reading Shakespeare," said M. Auger.

His poetry has the sharp perfume of honey made by the vagabond bee without a hive. Here prose, there verse; all forms, being but receptacles for the idea, suit him. This poetry weeps and laughs. The English tongue, a language little formed, now assists, now harms him, but everywhere the deep mind gushes forth translucent. Shakespeare's drama proceeds with a kind of distracted rhythm; it is so vast that it staggers; it has and gives the vertigo; but nothing is so solid as this excited grandeur. Shakespeare, shuddering, has in himself the winds, the spirits, the philters, the vibrations, the fluctuations of transient breezes, the obscure penetration of effluvia, the great unknown sap. Thence his agitation, in the depth of which is repose. It is this agitation in which Goethe is wanting, wrongly praised for his impassiveness, which is inferiority. This agitation, all minds of the first order have it. It is in Job, in Æschylus, in Alighieri. This agitation is humanity. On earth the divine must be human. It must propose to itself its own enigma and feel disturbed about it. Inspiration being prodigy, a sacred stupor mingles with it. A certain majesty of mind resembles solitudes and is blended with astonishment. Shakespeare, like all great poets, like all great things, is absorbed by a dream. His own vegetation astounds him; his own tempest appals him. It seems at times as if Shakespeare terrified Shakespeare. He shudders at his own depth. This is the sign of supreme intellects. It is his own vastness which shakes him and imparts to him unaccountable huge oscillations. There is no genius without waves. An inebriated savage it may be. He has the wildness of the virgin forest; he has the intoxication of the high sea.

Shakespeare (the condor alone gives some idea of such gigantic gait) departs, arrives, starts again, mounts, descends, hovers, dives, sinks, rushes, plunges into the depths below, plunges into the depths above.

He is one of those geniuses that God purposely leaves unbridled, so that they may go headlong and in full flight into the infinite.

From time to time comes on this globe one of these spirits. Their passage, as we have said, renews art, science, philosophy, or society.

They fill a century, then disappear. Then it is not one century alone that their light illumines: it is humanity from one end to another of time, and it is perceived that each of these men was the human mind itself contained whole in one brain, and coming, at a given moment, to give on earth an impetus to progress.

These supreme spirits, once life achieved and the work completed, go in death to rejoin the mysterious group, and are probably at home in the infinite.

BOOK II.

SHAKESPEARE—HIS WORK—THE CULMINATING POINTS.

CHAPTER I.

The characteristic of men of genius of the first order is to produce each a peculiar model of man. All bestow on humanity its portrait; some laughing, some weeping, others pensive. These last are the greatest. Plautus laughs and gives to man Amphitryon, Rabelais laughs and gives to man Gargantua, Cervantes laughs and gives to man Don Quixote, Beaumarchais laughs and gives to man Figaro, Molière weeps and gives to man Alceste, Shakespeare dreams and gives to man Hamlet, Æschylus meditates and gives to man Prometheus. The others are great; Æschylus and Shakespeare are immense.

These portraits of humanity, left to humanity as a last farewell by those passers-by, the poets, are rarely flattered, always exact, striking likenesses. Vice, or folly, or virtue, is extracted from the soul and stamped on the visage. The tear congealed becomes a pearl; the smile petrified ends by looking like a menace; wrinkles are the furrows of wisdom; some frowns are tragic. This series of models of man is the permanent lesson for generations; each century

adds in some figures, sometimes done in full light and strong relief, like Macette, Célimène, Tartuffe, Turcaret, and the Nephew of Rameau. Sometimes simple profiles, like Gil Blas, Manon Lescaut, Clarissa Harlowe, and Candide.

God creates by intuition; man creates by inspiration, strengthened by observation. This second creation, which is nothing else but divine action carried out by man, is what is called genius.

The poet stepping into the place of destiny, an invention of men and events so strange, so true to nature, and so masterly, that certain religious sects hold it in horror as an encroachment upon Providence, and call the poet "the liar;" the conscience of man, taken in the act and placed in a medium which it combats, governs or transforms, such is the drama. And there is in this something superior. This handling of the human soul seems a kind of equality with God. Equality, the mystery of which is explained when we reflect that God is within man. This equality is identity. Who is our conscience? He. And He counsels good acts. Who is our intelligence? He. And He inspires the *chef-d'œuvre.*

God may be there, but it removes nothing, as we have proved, from the sourness of critics; the greatest minds are those which are most brought into question. It even sometimes happens that true intellects attack genius; the inspired, strangely enough, do not recognise inspiration. Erasmus, Bayle, Scaliger, St. Evremond, Voltaire, many of the Fathers of the Church, whole families of philosophers, the whole School of Alexandria, Cicero, Horace, Lucian, Plutarch, Josephus, Dion Chrysostom, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Philostratus, Metrodorus of Lampsacus, Plato, Pythagoras, have severally criticized Homer. In this enumeration we omit Zoïlus. Men who deny are not critics. Hatred is not intelligence. To insult is not to discuss. Zoïlus, Mævius, Cecchi, Green, Avellaneda,

William Lauder, Visé, Fréron, no cleansing of these names is possible. These men have wounded the human race through her men of genius; these wretched hands for ever retain the colour of the mud that they have thrown.

And these men have not even either the sad renown that they seem to have acquired by right, or the whole quantity of shame that they have hoped for. One scarcely knows that they have existed. They are half forgotten, a greater humiliation than to be wholly forgotten. With the exception of two or three among them who have become by-words of contempt, despicable owls, nailed up for an example, all these wretched names are unknown. An obscure notoriety follows their equivocal existence. Look at this Clement, who had called himself the "hypercritic," and whose profession it was to bite and denounce Diderot, he disappears, and is confounded, although born at Geneva, with Clement of Dijon, confessor to Mesdames, with David Clement, author of the *Bibliothèque Curieuse;* with Clement of Baize, Benedictine of St. Maur, and with Clement d'Ascain, Capuchin, definator and provincial of Béarn. What avails it him to have declared that the work of Diderot is but an "obscure verbiage," and to have died mad at Charenton, to be afterwards submerged in four or five unknown Clements? In vain did Famien Strada rabidly attack Tacitus; one scarcely knows him now from Fabien Spada, called "*l'Épée de Bois,*" the jester of Sigismond Augustus. In vain did Cecchi vilify Dante; we are not certain whether his name was not Cecco. In vain did Green fasten on Shakespeare; he is now confounded with Greene. Avellaneda, the "enemy" of Cervantes, is perhaps Avellanedo. Lauder, the slanderer of Milton, is perhaps Leuder. The unknown de Visé, who tormented Molière, turns out to be a certain Donneau; he had surnamed himself de Visé, through a taste for nobility. Those men relied, in

order to create for themselves a little *éclat*, on the greatness of those whom they outraged. But no, they have remained obscure. These poor insulters did not get their salary. Contempt has failed them. Let us pity them.

CHAPTER II.

Let us add that calumny loses its labour. Then what purpose can it serve? Not even an evil one. Do you know anything more useless than the sting which does not sting?

Better still. This sting is beneficial. In a given time it is found that calumny, envy, and hatred, thinking to labour against, have worked in aid of truth. Their insults bring fame, their blackening makes illustrious. They succeed only in mingling with glory an outcry which increases it.

Let us continue.

So, each of the men of genius tries on in his turn this immense human mask, and such is the strength of the soul which they cause to pass through the mysterious aperture of the eyes, that this look changes the mask, and, from terrible, makes it comic, then pensive, then grieved, then young and smiling, then decrepit, then sensual and gluttonous, then religious, then outrageous; and it is Cain, Job, Atreus, Ajax, Priam, Hecuba, Niobe, Clytemnestra, Nausicaa, Pistoclerus, Grumio, Davus, Pasicompsa, Chimène, Don Arias, Don Diego, Mudarra, Richard III., Lady Macbeth, Desdemona, Juliet, Romeo, Lear, Sancho Panza, Pantagruel, Panurge, Arnolphe, Dandin Sganarelle, Agnes, Rosine, Victorine, Basile, Almaviva, Cherubin, Manfred.

From the direct divine creation proceeds Adam, the prototype. From the indirect divine creation, that is to say, from the human creation, proceed other Adams, the types.

A type does not produce any man in particular:

it cannot be exactly superposed upon any individual; it sums up and concentrates under one human form a whole family of characters and minds. A type is no abridgment; it is a condensation. It is not one, it is all. Alcibiades is but Alcibiades, Petronius is but Petronius, Bassompierre is but Bassompierre, Buckingham is but Buckingham, Fronsac is but Fronsac, Lauzun is but Lauzun; but take Lauzun, Fronsac, Buckingham, Bassompierre, Petronius, and Alcibiades, and pound them in the mortar of imagination, and from that process you have a phantom more real than them all, Don Juan. Take the usurers one by one, no one of them is that fierce merchant of Venice, crying, "Go, Tubal, fee me an officer, bespeak him a fortnight before; I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit." Take all the usurers together, from the crowd of them comes a total, Shylock. Sum up usury, you have Shylock. The metaphor of the people, who are never mistaken, confirms, without knowing it, the inventions of the poet; and, whilst Shakespeare makes Shylock, it creates the gripe-all. Shylock is the Jewish bargaining; he is also Judaism; that is to say, his whole nation, the high as well as the low, faith as well as fraud, and it is because he sums up a whole race, such as oppression has made it, that Shylock is great. Jews, even those of the Middle Ages, might with reason say that not one of them is Shylock. Men of pleasure may with reason say that not one of them is Don Juan. No leaf of the orange-tree when chewed gives the flavour of the orange, yet there is a deep affinity, an identity of roots, a sap rising from the same source, the sharing of the same subterraneous shadow before life. The fruit contains the mystery of the tree, and the type contains the mystery of the man. Hence the strange vitality of the type. For, and this is the prodigy, the type lives. If it were but an abstraction, men would not recognise it, and would allow this shadow to pass by. The

tragedy termed classic makes larvæ; the drama creates types. A lesson which is a man, a myth with a human face so plastic that it looks at you, and that its look is a mirror, a parable which warns you, a symbol which cries out "beware," an idea which is nerve, muscle, and flesh, and which has a heart to love, bowels to suffer, eyes to weep, and teeth to devour or laugh, a psychical conception with the relief of actual fact, and which, if it bleeds, drops real blood, that is the type. O power of true poetry! types are beings. They breathe, palpitate, their steps are heard on the floor, they exist. They exist with an existence more intense than that of any creature thinking himself living there in the street. These phantoms have more density than man. There is in their essence that amount of eternity which belongs to *chefs-d'œuvre*, and which makes Trimalcion live, whilst M. Romieu is dead.

Types are cases foreseen by God; genius realizes them. It seems that God prefers to teach man a lesson through man, in order to inspire confidence. The poet is on the pavement of the living; he speaks to them nearer to their ear. Thence the efficacy of types. Man is a premiss, the type the conclusion; God creates the phenomenon, genius puts a name on it; God creates the miser only, genius Harpagon; God creates the traitor only, genius makes Iago; God creates the coquette, genius makes Célimène; God creates the citizen only, genius makes Chrysale; God creates the king only, genius makes Grandgousier. Sometimes, at a given moment, the type proceeds complete from some unknown partnership of the mass of the people with a great natural comedian, involuntary and powerful realizer; the crowd is a midwife; in an epoch which bears at one of its extremities Talleyrand, and at another Chodruc-Duclos springs up suddenly, in a flash of lightning, under the mysterious incubation of the theatre, that spectre, Robert Macaire.

Types go and come firmly in art and in nature. They are the ideal realized. The good and the evil of man are in these figures. From each of them results, in the eyes of the thinker, a humanity.

As we have said before, so many types, so many Adams. The man of Homer, Achilles, is an Adam; from him comes the species of the slayers: the man of Æschylus, Prometheus, is an Adam; from him comes the race of the fighters: Shakespeare's man, Hamlet, is an Adam; to him belongs the family of the dreamers. Other Adams, created by poets, incarnate, this one passion, another duty, another reason, another conscience, another the fall, another the ascension. Prudence, drifting to trepidation, goes on from the old man Nestor to the old man Géronte. Love, drifting to appetite, goes on from Daphne to Lovelace. Beauty, entwined with the serpent, goes from Eve to Melusina. The types begin in Genesis, and a link of their chain passes through Restif de la Bretonne and Vadé. The lyric suits them, Billingsgate is not unbecoming to them. They speak in country dialects by the mouth of Gros-René, and in Homer they say to Minerva, holding them by the hair of the head: "What dost thou want with me, goddess?"

A surprising exception has been conceded to Dante. The man of Dante is Dante. Dante has, so to speak, created a second time in his poem; he is his own type; his Adam is himself. For the action of his poem he has sought out no one. He has only taken Virgil as supernumerary. Moreover he made himself epic at once, without even giving himself the trouble to change his name. What he had to do was in fact simple; to descend into hell and remount to heaven. What good was it to trouble himself for so little? He knocks gravely at the door of the infinite and says, "Open, I am Dante."

CHAPTER III.

Two marvellous Adams, we have just said, are the man of Æschylus, Prometheus, and the man of Shakespeare, Hamlet.

Prometheus is action. Hamlet is hesitation.

In Prometheus, the obstacle is exterior; in Hamlet it is interior.

In Prometheus, the will is securely nailed down by nails of brass and cannot get loose; besides, it has by its side two watchers, Force and Power. In Hamlet the will is more tied down yet; it is bound by previous meditation, the endless chain of the undecided. Try to get out of yourself if you can! What a Gordian knot is our reverie! Slavery from within, that is slavery indeed. Scale this enclosure, "to dream!" escape, if you can, from this prison, "to love!" the only dungeon is that which walls conscience in. Prometheus, in order to be free, has but a bronze collar to break and a god to conquer; Hamlet must break and conquer himself. Prometheus can raise himself upright, if he only lifts a mountain; to raise himself up, Hamlet must lift his own thoughts. If Prometheus plucks the vulture from his breast, all is said; Hamlet must tear Hamlet from his breast. Prometheus and Hamlet are two naked spleens; from one runs blood, from the other doubt.

We are in the habit of comparing Æschylus and Shakespeare by Orestes and Hamlet, these two tragedies being the same drama. Never in fact was a subject more identical. The learned mark an analogy between them; the impotent, who are also the ignorant,

the envious, who are also the imbeciles, have the petty joy of thinking they establish a plagiarism. It is after all a possible field for the erudition and for serious criticism. Hamlet walks behind Orestes, parricide through filial love. This easy comparison, rather superficial than deep, strikes us less than the mysterious confronting of those two enchained beings, Prometheus and Hamlet.

Let us not forget that the human mind, half divine as it is, creates from time to time superhuman works. These superhuman works of man are moreover more numerous than it is thought, for they entirely fill art. Out of poetry, where marvels abound, there is in music Beethoven, in sculpture Phidias, in architecture Piranesi, in painting Rembrandt, and in painting, architecture, and sculpture Michael Angelo. We pass many over, and not the least.

Prometheus and Hamlet are amongst those more than human works.

A kind of gigantic determination, the usual measure exceeded, greatness everywhere, that which astounds ordinary intellects demonstrated when necessary by the improbable, destiny, society, law, religion brought to trial and judgment in the name of the Unknown, the abyss of the mysterious equilibrium; the event treated as a *rôle* played out and, on occasion, hurled as a reproach against Fatality or Providence; passion, terrible personage, going and coming in man; the audacity and sometimes the insolence of reason, the haughty forms of a style at ease in all extremes, and at the same time a profound wisdom, the gentleness of the giant, the goodness of a softened monster, an ineffable dawn which cannot be accounted for and which lights up everything; such are the signs of those supreme works. In certain poems there is starlight.

This light is in Æschylus and in Shakespeare.

CHAPTER IV.

NOTHING can be more fiercely wild than Prometheus stretched on the Caucasus. It is gigantic tragedy. The old punishment that our ancient laws of torture call extension, and which Cartouche escaped because of a hernia, Prometheus undergoes it; only the wooden horse is a mountain. What is his crime? Right. To characterize right as crime, and movement as rebellion, is the immemorial talent of tyrants. Prometheus has done on Olympus what Eve did in Eden; he has taken a little knowledge. Jupiter, identical with Jehovah (*Iovi*, *Iova*), punishes this temerity: to have desired to live. The Eginetic traditions, which localize Jupiter, deprive him of the cosmic personality of the Jehovah of Genesis. The Greek Jupiter, bad son of a bad father, in rebellion against Saturn, who has himself been a rebel against Cœlus, is a *parvenu*. The Titans are a sort of elder branch, which has its legitimists, of whom Æschylus, the avenger of Prometheus, was one. Prometheus is right conquered. Jupiter has, as is always the case, consummated the usurpation of power by the punishment of right. Olympus claims the aid of Caucasus. Prometheus is fastened there to the carcan. There is the Titan, fallen, prostrate, nailed down. Mercury, the friend of everybody, comes to give him such counsel as follows generally the perpetration of *coups d'état*. Mercury is the type of cowardly intellect, of every possible vice, but of vice full of wit; Mercury, the god of vice, serves Jupiter the god of crime. This fawning in evil is still marked to-day by the

veneration of the pickpocket for the assassin. There is something of that law in the arrival of the diplomatist behind the conqueror. The *chefs-d'œuvre* are immense in this, that they are eternally present to the deeds of humanity. Prometheus on the Caucasus, is Poland after 1772; France, after 1815; the Revolution, after Brumaire. Mercury speaks; Prometheus listens but little. Offers of amnesty miscarry when it is the victim who alone should have the right to grant pardon. Prometheus, though conquered, scorns Mercury standing proudly above him, and Jupiter standing above Mercury, and Destiny standing above Jupiter. Prometheus jests at the vulture which gnaws at him; he shrugs disdainfully his shoulders as much as his chain allows; what does he care for Jupiter, and what good is Mercury? There is no hold on this haughty sufferer. The scorching thunderbolt causes a smart, which is a constant call upon pride. Meanwhile tears flow around him, the earth despairs, the women-clouds, the fifty Oceanides, come to worship the Titan, the forests scream, wild beasts groan, winds howl, the waves sob, the elements moan, the world suffers in Prometheus, his carcan chokes universal life. An immense participation in the torture of the demigod seems to be henceforth the tragic delight of all nature; anxiety for the future mingles with it, and what is to be done now? How are we to move? What will become of us? And in the vast whole of created beings, things, men, animals, plants, rocks, all turned towards the Caucasus, is felt this inexpressible anguish: the liberator is enchained.

Hamlet, less of a giant and more of a man, is not less grand.

Hamlet, appalling, unaccountable, being complete in the incomplete. All, in order to be nothing. He is prince and demagogue, sagacious and extravagant, profound and frivolous, man and neuter. He has but little faith in the sceptre, rails at the throne, has

a student for his comrade, converses with any one passing by, argues with the first comer, understands the people, despises the mob, hates strength, suspects success, questions obscurity, and says "thou" to mystery. He gives to others maladies which he has not himself: his false folly inoculates his mistress with true folly. He is familiar with spectres and with comedians. He jests with the axe of Orestes in his hand. He talks of literature, recites verses, composes a theatrical criticism, plays with bones in a cemetery, thunderstrikes his mother, avenges his father, and ends the wonderful drama of life and death by a gigantic point of interrogation. He terrifies and then disconcerts. Never has anything more overwhelming been dreamt. It is the parricide saying: "What do I know?"

Parricide? Let us pause on that word. Is Hamlet a parricide? Yes and no. He confines himself to threatening his mother; but the threat is so fierce that the mother shudders. His words are like daggers. "What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me? Help! help! ho!"—and when she dies, Hamlet, without grieving for her, strikes Claudius with this tragic cry, "Follow my mother!" Hamlet is that sinister thing, the possible parricide.

In place of the northern ice which he has in his nature, let him have, like Orestes, southern fire in his veins, and he will kill his mother.

This drama is stern. In it truth doubts. Sincerity lies. Nothing can be more immense, more subtile. In it man is the world, and the world is Zero. Hamlet, even full of life, is not sure of his existence. In this tragedy, which is at the same time a philosophy, everything floats, hesitates, delays, staggers, becomes discomposed, scatters, and is dispersed. Thought is a cloud, will is a vapour, resolution is a crepuscule; the action blows each moment in an inverse direction, man is governed by the winds.

Overwhelming and vertiginous work, in which is seen the depth of everything, in which thought oscillates only between the king murdered and Yorick buried, and in which what is best realized, is royalty represented by a ghost, and mirth represented by a death's-head.

Hamlet is the *chef-d'œuvre* of the tragedy-dream.

CHAPTER V.

One of the probable causes of the feigned folly of Hamlet has not been up to the present time indicated by critics. It has been said, "Hamlet acts the madman to hide his thought, like Brutus." In fact, it is easy for apparent imbecility to hatch a great project; the supposed idiot can take aim deliberately. But the case of Brutus is not that of Hamlet. Hamlet acts the madman for his safety. Brutus screens his project, Hamlet his person. The manners of those tragic courts being known, from the moment that Hamlet, through the revelation of the ghost, is acquainted with the crime of Claudius, Hamlet is in danger. The superior historian within the poet is here manifested, and one feels the deep insight of Shakespeare into the ancient darkness of royalty. In the Middle Ages and in the Lower Empire, and even at earlier periods, woe unto him who found out a murder or a poisoning committed by a king! Ovid, according to Voltaire's conjecture, was exiled from Rome for having seen something shameful in the house of Augustus. To know that the king was an assassin was a state crime. When it pleased the prince not to have had a witness, it was a matter involving one's head to ignore everything. It was bad policy to have good eyes. A man suspected of suspicion was lost. He had but one refuge, folly; to pass for "an innocent;" he was despised, and that was all. Do you remember the advice that, in Æschylus, the Ocean gives to Prometheus, "To look a fool is the secret of the wise man." When the Chamberlain Hugolin

found the iron spit with which Edrick the Vendee had impaled Edmond II., "he hastened to put on madness," says the Saxon Chronicle of 1016, and saved himself in that way. Heraclian of Nisibe, having discovered by chance that Rhinomete was a fratricide, had himself declared mad by the doctors, and succeeded in getting himself shut up for life in a cloister. He thus lived peaceably, growing old and waiting for death with a vacant stare. Hamlet runs the same peril, and has recourse to the same means. He gets himself declared mad like Heraclian, and puts on folly like Hugolin. This does not prevent the restless Claudius from twice making an effort to get rid of him, in the middle of the drama by the axe or the dagger in England, and towards the conclusion by poison.

The same indication is again found in King Lear: the Earl of Gloucester's son takes refuge also in apparent lunacy; there is in that a key to open and understand Shakespeare's thought. In the eyes of the philosophy of art, the feigned folly of Edgar throws light upon the feigned folly of Hamlet.

The Amleth of Belleforest is a magician, the Hamlet of Shakespeare is a philosopher. We just now spoke of the strange reality which characterizes poetical creations. There is no more striking example than this type, Hamlet. Hamlet has nothing belonging to an abstraction about him. He has been at the University; he has the Danish rudeness softened by Italian politeness; he is small, plump, somewhat lymphatic; he fences well with the sword, but is soon out of breath. He does not care to drink too soon during the assault of arms with Laërtes, probably for fear of producing perspiration. After having thus supplied his personage with real life, the poet can launch him into full ideal. There is ballast enough.

Other works of the human mind equal "Hamlet," none surpasses it. The whole majesty of melancholy

is in Hamlet. An open sepulchre from which goes forth a drama, this is colossal. Hamlet, is to our mind, Shakespeare's chief work.

No figure among those that poets have created is more poignant and stirring. Doubt counselled by a ghost, that is Hamlet. Hamlet has seen his dead father and has spoken to him. Is he convinced? No, he shakes his head. What shall he do? He does not know. His hands clench, then fall by his side. Within him are conjectures, systems, monstrous apparitions, bloody recollections, veneration for the spectre, hate, tenderness, anxiety to act and not to act, his father, his mother, his duties in contradiction to each other, a deep storm. Livid hesitation is in his mind. Shakespeare, wonderful plastic poet, makes the grandiose pallor of this soul almost visible. Like the great larva of Albert Dürer, Hamlet might be named "Melancholia." He also has above his head the bat which flies embowelled, and at his feet science, the sphere, the compass, the hour-glass, love, and behind him in the horizon an enormous terrible sun which seems to make the sky but darker.

Nevertheless at least one half of Hamlet is anger, transport, outrage, hurricane, sarcasm to Ophelia, malediction on his mother, insult to himself. He talks with the gravediggers, nearly laughs, then clutches Laërtes by the hair in the very grave of Ophelia and stamps furiously upon the coffin. Sword-thrusts at Polonius, sword-thrusts at Laërtes, sword-thrusts at Claudius. From time to time his inaction is torn in twain, and from the rent comes forth thunder.

He is tormented by that possible life, intermixed with reality and chimera, the anxiety of which is shared by all of us. There is in all his actions an expanded somnambulism. One might almost consider his brain as a formation; there is a layer of suffering, a layer of thought, then a layer of dreaminess. It is through this layer of dreaminess that he

feels, comprehends, learns, perceives, drinks, eats, frets, mocks, weeps, and reasons. There is between life and him a transparency; it is the wall of dreams; one sees beyond, but one cannot step over it. A kind of cloudy obstacle everywhere surrounds Hamlet. Have you ever whilst sleeping had the nightmare of pursuit or flight, and tried to hasten on, and felt anchylosis in the knees, heaviness in the arms, the horror of paralysed hands, the impossibility of movement? This nightmare Hamlet undergoes whilst waking. Hamlet is not upon the spot where his life is. He has ever the appearance of a man who talks to you from the other side of a stream. He calls to you at the same time that he questions you. He is at a distance from the catastrophe in which he takes part, from the passer-by whom he interrogates, from the thought that he carries, from the action that he performs. He seems not to touch even what he grinds. It is isolation in its highest degree. It is the loneliness of a mind, even more than the loftiness of a prince. Indecision is in fact a solitude. You have not even your will to keep you company. It is as if your own self was absent and had left you there. The burden of Hamlet is less rigid than that of Orestes, but more undulating; Orestes carries predestination, Hamlet carries fate.

And thus apart from men, Hamlet has still in him a something which represents them all. *Agnosco fratrem.* At certain hours, if we felt our own pulse, we would have conscience of his fever. His strange reality is our own reality after all. He is the funeral man that we all are in certain situations. Unhealthy as he is, Hamlet expresses a permanent condition of man. He represents the discomfort of the soul in a life which is not sufficiently adapted to it. He represents the shoe that pinches and stops our walking; the shoe is the body. Shakespeare frees him from it, and he is right. Hamlet—prince if you like, but king

never—Hamlet is incapable of governing a people, he lives too much in a world beyond. On the other hand, he does better than to reign; he is. Take from him his family, his country, his ghost, and the whole adventure at Elsinore, and even in the form of an inactive type, he remains strangely terrible. That is the consequence of the amount of humanity and the amount of mystery that is in him. Hamlet is formidable, which does not prevent his being ironical. He has the two profiles of destiny.

Let us retract a statement made above. The chief work of Shakespeare is not "Hamlet." The chief work of Shakespeare is all Shakespeare. That is moreover true of all minds of this order. They are mass, block, majesty, bible, and their solemnity is their *ensemble*.

Have you sometimes looked upon a cape prolonging itself under the clouds and jutting out, as far as the eye can go, into the deep water? Each of its hillocks contributes to make it up. No one of its undulations is lost in its dimension. Its strong outline is sharply marked upon the sky, and enters as far as possible into the waves, and there is not a useless rock. Thanks to this cape, you can go amidst the boundless waters, walk amongst the winds, see closely the eagles soar and the monsters swim, let your humanity wander midst the eternal hum, penetrate the impenetrable. The poet renders this service to your mind. A genius is a promontory into the infinite.

CHAPTER VI.

NEAR "Hamlet," and on the same level, must be placed three grand dramas: "Macbeth," "Othello," "King Lear."

Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Lear, these four figures tower upon the lofty edifice of Shakespeare. We have said what Hamlet is.

To say, "Macbeth is ambition," is to say nothing. Macbeth is hunger. What hunger? The hunger of ten monsters, which is always possible in man. Certain souls have teeth. Do not wake up their hunger.

To bite at the apple, that is a fearful thing. The apple is called *Omnia*, says Filesac, that doctor of the Sorbonne who confessed Ravaillac. Macbeth has a wife whom the chronicle calls Gruoch. This Eve tempts this Adam. Once Macbeth has given the first bite he is lost. The first thing that Adam produces with Eve is Cain; the first thing that Macbeth accomplishes with Gruoch is murder.

Covetousness easily becoming violence, violence easily becoming crime, crime easily becoming folly; this progression is Macbeth. Covetousness, Crime, Folly; these three vampires have spoken to him in the solitude, and have invited him to the throne. The cat Graymalkin has called him, Macbeth will be cunning; the toad Paddock has called him, Macbeth will be horror. The *unsexed* being, Gruoch, completes him. It is done; Macbeth is no longer a man. He is nothing more than an unconscious energy rushing

wildly towards evil. Henceforth, no notion of right; appetite is everything. Transitory right, royalty, eternal right, hospitality, Macbeth murders them all. He does more than slay them, he ignores them. Before they fell bleeding under his hand, they already lay dead within his soul. Macbeth commences by this parricide to kill Duncan, to kill his guest, a crime so terrible, that from the counter-blow in the night, when their master is stabbed, the horses of Duncan again become wild. The first step taken, the fall begins. It is the avalanche. Macbeth rolls headlong. He is precipitated. He falls and rebounds from one crime to another, always deeper and deeper. He undergoes the mournful gravitation of matter invading the soul. He is a thing that destroys. He is a stone of ruin, flame of war, beast of prey, scourge. He marches over all Scotland, king as he is, his bare legged kernes and his heavily-armed gallowglasses, devouring, pillaging, slaying. He decimates the Thanes, he kills Banquo, he kills all the Macduffs except the one who shall slay him, he kills the nobility, he kills the people, he kills his country, he kills "sleep." At length the catastrophe arrives, the forest of Birnam moves against him; Macbeth has infringed all, burst through everything, violated everything, torn everything, and this desperation ends in arousing even nature; nature loses patience, nature enters into action against Macbeth, nature becomes soul against the man who has become brute force.

This drama has epic proportions. Macbeth represents that frightful hungry one who prowls throughout history, called brigand in the forest and on the throne conqueror. The ancestor of Macbeth is Nimrod. These men of force, are they for ever furious? Let us be just; no. They have a goal, which being attained, they stop. Give to Alexander, to Cyrus, to Sesostris, to Cæsar, what? the world; they are ap-

peased. Geoffroy St. Hilaire said to me one day, "When the lion has eaten, he is at peace with nature." For Cambyses, Sennacherib, and Genghis Khan, and their parallels, to have eaten is to possess all the earth. They would calm themselves down in the process of digesting the human race.

Now what is Othello? He is night. An immense fatal figure. Night is amorous of day. Darkness loves the dawn. The African adores the white woman. Desdemona is Othello's brightness and frenzy! And then how easy to him is jealousy! He is great, he is dignified, he is majestic, he soars above all heads, he has as an escort bravery, battle, the braying of trumpets, the banner of war, renown, glory; he is radiant with twenty victories, he is studded with stars, this Othello: but he is black. And thus how soon, when jealous, the hero becomes monster, the black becomes the negro! How speedily has night beckoned to death!

By the side of Othello, who is night, there is Iago, who is evil. Evil, the other form of darkness. Night is but the night of the world; evil is the night of the soul. How deeply black are perfidy and falsehood! To have ink or treason in the veins is the same thing. Whoever has jostled against imposture and perjury knows it. One must blindly grope one's way with roguery. Pour hypocrisy upon the break of day, and you put out the sun, and this, thanks to false religions, happens to God.

Iago near Othello is the precipice near the landslip. "This way!" he says in a low voice. The snare advises blindness. The being of darkness guides the black. Deceit takes upon itself to give what light may be required by night. Jealousy uses falsehood as the blind man his dog. Iago the traitor, opposed to whiteness and candour, Othello the negro, what can be more terrible! These ferocities of the darkness act in unison. These two incarnations of the eclipse

comprise together, the one roaring, the other sneering, the tragic suffocation of light.

Sound this profound thing. Othello is the night, and being night, and wishing to kill, what does he take to slay with? Poison? the club? the axe? the knife? No, the pillow. To kill is to lull to sleep. Shakespeare himself perhaps did not take this into account. The creator sometimes, almost unknown to himself, yields to his type, so much is that type a power. And it is thus that Desdemona, spouse of the man Night, dies stifled by the pillow, which has had the first kiss, and which has the last sigh.

Lear is the occasion for Cordelia. Maternity of the daughter towards the father; profound subject; maternity venerable among all other maternities, so admirably translated by the legend of that Roman girl, who, in the depth of a prison, nurses her old father. The young breast near the white beard, there is not a spectacle more holy. This filial breast is Cordelia.

Once this figure dreamt of and found, Shakespeare created his drama. Where should he put this consoling vision? In an obscure age. Shakespeare has taken the year of the world 3105, the time when Joas was king of Judah, Aganippus, king of France, and Leir, king of England. The whole earth was at that time mysterious. Represent to yourself that epoch: the temple of Jerusalem is still quite new, the gardens of Semiramis, constructed nine hundred years previously, begin to crumble, the first gold coin appears in Ægina, the first balance is made by Phydon, tyrant of Argos, the first eclipse of the sun is calculated by the Chinese, three hundred and twelve years have passed since Orestes, accused by the Eumenides before the Areopagus, was acquitted, Hesiod is just dead, Homer, if he still lives, is a hundred years old, Lycurgus, thoughtful traveller, re-enters Sparta, and one may perceive in the depth of the sombre cloud of

the East the chariot fire which carries Elias away; it is at that period that Leir—Lear—lives, and reigns over the dark islands. Jonas, Holofernes, Draco, Solon, Thespis, Nabuchodonosor, Anaximenes who is to invent the signs of the Zodiac, Cyrus, Zorobabel, Tarquin, Pythagoras, Æschylus, are not born yet. Coriolanus, Xerxes, Cincinnatus, Pericles, Socrates, Brennus, Aristotle, Timoleon, Demosthenes, Alexander, Epicurus, Hannibal, are larvæ waiting their hour to enter among men. Judas Maccabæus, Viriatus, Popilius, Jugurtha, Mithridates, Marius and Sylla, Cæsar and Pompey, Cleopatra and Antony, are far away in the future, and at the moment when Lear is king of Brittany and of Iceland, there must pass away eight hundred and ninety-five years before Virgil says "*Penitùs toto divisos orbe Britannos,*" and nine hundred and fifty years before Seneca says "*Ultima Thule.*" The Picts and the Celts, the Scotch and the English, are tattooed. A redskin of the present day gives a vague idea of an Englishman then. It is this twilight that Shakespeare has chosen; a broad night well adapted to the dream in which this inventor at his pleasure puts everything that he chooses, this King Lear, and then a King of France, a Duke of Burgundy, a Duke of Cornwall, a Duke of Albany, an Earl of Kent, and an Earl of Gloster. What does your history matter to him who has humanity? Besides, he has with him the legend, which is a kind of science also, and as true as history perhaps, but in another point of view. Shakespeare agrees with Walter Mapes, archdeacon of Oxford—that is something; he admits, from Brutus to Cadwalla, the ninety-nine Celtic kings who have preceded the Scandinavian Hengist and the Saxon Horsa; and since he believes in Mulmutius, Cinigisil, Ceolulf, Cassibelan, so in Shakespeare's "Cymbeline," both in prose and verse, Cynulphus, Arviragus, Guiderius, Escuin, Cudred, Vortigern, Arthur, Uther Pendragon, he has

every right to believe in King Lear, and to create Cordelia. This land adopted, the place for the scene marked out, this foundation established, he takes everything and builds his work. Unheard-of edifice. He takes tyranny, of which, at a later period, he will make weakness, Lear; he takes treason, Edmond; he takes devotion, Kent; he takes ingratitude which begins with a caress, and he gives to this monster two heads, Goneril, whom the legend calls Gornerille, and Regan, whom the legend calls Ragaü; he takes paternity; he takes royalty; he takes feudality; he takes ambition; he takes madness, which he divides into three, and he puts in presence three madmen, the king's buffoon, madman by trade, Edgar of Gloster, mad for prudence's sake, the king mad through misery. It is at the summit of this tragic heap that he raises Cordelia.

There are some formidable cathedral towers, like, for instance, the *giralda* of Seville, which seem made all complete with their spirals, their staircases, their sculptures, their cellars, their cœcums, their aërial cells, their sounding chambers, their bells, and their mass and their spire, and all their enormity, in order to carry an angel spreading on their summit her golden wings. Such is this drama, *King Lear*.

The father is the pretext for the daughter. This admirable human creation, Lear, serves as a support to that ineffable divine creation, Cordelia. The reason why that chaos of crimes, vices, madnesses, and miseries exists is, for the more splendid setting forth of virtue. Shakespeare, carrying Cordelia in his thoughts, created that tragedy like a god who, having an Aurora to put forward, makes a world expressly for it.

And what a figure is that father! What a caryatide! He is man bent down by weight, but shifts his burdens for others that are heavier. The more the old man becomes enfeebled the more his load

augments. He lives under an overburden. He bears at first power, then ingratitude, then isolation, then despair, then hunger and thirst, then madness, then all nature. Clouds overcast him, forests heap shadow on him, the hurricane beats on the nape of his neck, the tempest makes his mantle heavy as lead, the rain falls on his shoulders, he walks bent and haggard as if he had the two knees of night upon his back. Dismayed and yet immense he throws to the winds and to the hail this epic cry, "Why do you hate me, tempests? Why do you persecute me? *You are not my daughters.*" And then it is over, the light is extinguished, reason loses courage and leaves him. Lear is in his dotage. Ah! he is childish, this old man. Very well! he requires a mother. His daughter appears. His one daughter, Cordelia. For the two others, Regan and Goneril, are no longer his daughters save to that extent which gives them a right to the name of parricides.

Cordelia approaches.—"Sir, do you know me?" "You are a spirit, I know," replies the old man, with the sublime clairvoyance of bewilderment. From this moment the adorable nursing commences. Cordelia applies herself to nourish this old despairing soul, dying of inanition in hatred. Cordelia nourishes Lear with love, and his courage revives; she nourishes him with respect, and the smile returns; she nourishes him with hope, and confidence is restored; she nourishes him with wisdom, and reason revives. Lear, convalescent, rises again, and, step by step, returns again to life. The child becomes again an old man, the old man becomes a man again. And behold him happy, this wretched one. It is on this expansion of happiness that the catastrophe is hurled down. Alas! there are traitors, there are perjurers, there are murderers. Cordelia dies. Nothing more heartrending than this. The old man is stunned, he no longer understands anything, and embracing the

corpse, he expires. He dies on this dead one. The supreme despair is spared him of remaining behind her among the living, poor shadow, to feel the place in his heart empty and to seek for his soul, carried away by that sweet being who is departed. O God, those whom thou lovest thou dost not allow to survive.

To live after the flight of the angel, to be the father orphan of his child, to be the eye which no longer has light, to be the deadened heart which has no more joy, from time to time to stretch the hands into obscurity, and try to reclasp a being who was there? Where, then, can she be? To feel himself forgotten in that departure, to have lost all reason for being here below, to be henceforth a man who goes to and fro before a sepulchre, not received, not admitted; that would be indeed a gloomy destiny. Thou hast done well, poet, to kill this old man.

BOOK III.

ZOILUS AS ETERNAL AS HOMER.

CHAPTER I.

"Ce courtisan grossier du profane vulgaire."*

THIS Alexandrine is by La Harpe, who hurls it at Shakespeare. Somewhere else La Harpe says, "Shakespeare panders to the mob."

Voltaire, as a matter of course, reproaches Shakespeare with antithesis: that is well. And La Beaumelle reproaches Voltaire with antithesis; that is better.

Voltaire, when he is himself in question *pro domo suâ*, gets angry. "But," he writes, "this Langleviel, alias La Beaumelle, is an ass! I defy you to find in any poet, in any book, a fine thing which is not an image or an antithesis."

Voltaire's criticism is double-edged. He wounds and is wounded. This is how he characterises the "Ecclesiastes" and the "Canticle of Canticles"—"works without order, full of low images and coarse expressions."

A little while after, furious, he exclaims,

"On m'ose préférer Crébillon le barbare!"†

An idler of the Œil-de-Bœuf, wearing the red

* This coarse flatterer of the vulgar herd.
† To me they dare to prefer Crébillon the barbarian.

heel and the blue ribbon, a stripling and a marquis, M. de Créqui, comes to Ferney, and writes with an air of superiority, "I have seen Voltaire, that childish old man."

That injustice should receive a counterstroke from injustice, is nothing more than right, and Voltaire gets what he deserved. But to throw stones at men of genius is a general law, and all have to bear it. Insult is a crown, it appears.

For Saumaise, Æschylus is nothing but farrago.* Quintilian understands nothing of the "Orestias." Sophocles mildly scorned Æschylus. "When he does well, he does not know it," said Sophocles. Racine rejected everything, except two or three scenes of the "Choephori," which he condescended to spare by a note in the margin of his copy of Æschylus. Fontenelle says in his "Remarques," "One does not know what to make of the 'Prometheus' of Æschylus. Æschylus is a kind of madman." The eighteenth century without exception railed at Diderot for admiring the "Eumenides."

"The whole of Dante is a hotch-potch," says Chaudon. "Michael Angelo wearies me," says Joseph de Maistre. "Not one of the eight comedies of Cervantes is supportable," says La Harpe. "It is a pity that Molière does not know how to write," says Fénélon. "Molière is a worthless histrion," says Bossuet. "A schoolboy would avoid the mistakes of Milton," says the Abbé Trublet, an authority as good as another. "Corneille exaggerates, Shakespeare raves," says that same Voltaire, who must always be fought against and fought for.

* The passage in Saumaise is curious and worth the trouble of being transcribed.

"*Unus ejus Agamemnon obscuritate superat quantum est librorum sacrorum cum suis hebraismis et syrianismis et totâ hellenisticâ supellectile vel farragine.*', (De Re Hellenisticâ, p. 38, ep. dedic.)

"Shakespeare," says Ben Jonson, "talked heavily and without any wit." How prove the contrary? Writings remain, talk passes away. Well, it is always so much denied to Shakespeare. That man of genius had no wit: how nicely that flatters the numberless men of wit who have no genius!

Some time before Scudéry called Corneille "*Corneille déplumée*" (unfeathered carrion crow), Green had called Shakespeare "a crow decked out with our feathers." In 1752 Diderot was sent to the fortress of Vincennes for having published the first volume of the "Encyclopædia," and the great success of the year was a print sold on the quays which represented a cordelier flogging Diderot. Although Weber is dead, an attenuating circumstance for those who are guilty of genius, he is turned into ridicule in Germany, and for thirty-three years a *chef-d'œuvre* has been disposed of with a pun. The *Euryanthe* is called *L'Ennuyante* (wearisome).

D'Alembert hits at one blow Calderon and Shakespeare. He writes to Voltaire (letter cv.): —"I have announced to the Academy your 'Heraclius' of Calderon. The Academy will read it with as much pleasure as the harlequinade of Gilles Shakespeare."

That everything should be perpetually brought again into question, that everything should be contested, even the incontestable, what does it matter? The eclipse is a good trial for truth as well as for liberty. Genius, being truth and liberty, has a claim to persecution. What matters to genius that which is transient? It was before, and will be after. It is not on this side of the sun that the eclipse throws darkness.

Everything can be written. Paper is patience itself. Last year a grave review printed this:— "Homer is now going out of fashion."

The judgment passed on the philosopher, on the artist, on the poet is completed by the portrait of the man.

Byron has killed his tailor. Molière has married his own daughter. Shakespeare has "loved" Lord Southampton.

> Et pour voir à la fin tous les vices ensemble,
> Le parterre en tumulte a demandé l'auteur.*

That *ensemble* of all vices is Beaumarchais.

As for Byron, we mention this name a second time; he is worth the trouble. Read "Glenarvon," and listen, on the subject of Byron's abominations, to Lady Bl——, whom he had loved, and who, of course, resented it.

Phidias was a procurer; Socrates was an apostate and a thief, *décrocheur de manteaux;* Spinosa was a renegade, and sought to obtain wills by undue influence; Dante was a peculator; Michael Angelo was cudgelled by Julius II., and quietly put up with it for the sake of five hundred crowns; d'Aubigné was a courtier sleeping in the water-closet of the king, ill-tempered when he was not paid, and for whom Henri IV. was too kind; Diderot was a libertine; Voltaire a miser; Milton was venal; he received a thousand pounds sterling for his apology, in Latin, of regicide: *Defensio pro se,* &c., &c. Who says these things? who relates these histories? That good person, your old fawning friend, O tyrants, your ancient comrade, O traitors, your old auxiliary, O bigots, your ancient comforter, O imbeciles! calumny.

* "And at last, in order to see all the vices together,
The riotous pit called for the author."

CHAPTER II.

Let us add a detail. Diatribe is, on certain occasions, a useful means of government.

Thus the hand of the police was in the print of "Diderot flogged," and the engraver of the cordelier must have been kindred to the turnkey of Vincennes. Governments, more passionate than necessary, neglect to remain strangers to the animosities of the lower orders. Political persecution of former days—it is of former days that we are speaking—willingly availed itself of a dash of literary persecution. Certainly, hatred hates without being paid for it. Envy, to do its work, does not need a minister of state to encourage it and to give it a pension, and there is such a thing as unofficial calumny. But a money-bag does no harm. When Roy, the court-poet, rhymed against Voltaire, "Tell me, daring stoic," &c., the position of treasurer of the chamber of Clermont, and the cross of St. Michael, were not likely to damp his enthusiasm for the court, and his spirit against Voltaire. A gratuity is pleasant to receive after a service rendered; the masters upstairs smile; you receive the agreeable order to insult some one you detest; you obey richly; you are free to bite like a glutton; you take your fill; it is all profit; you hate and you give satisfaction. Formerly authority had its scribes. It was a pack of hounds as good as any other. Against the free rebel spirit, the despot would let loose the scribbler. To torture was not sufficient; teasing was resorted to likewise. Trissotin held a confabulation with Vidocq, and from their *tête-à-tête* would burst a complex

inspiration. Pedagogism, thus supported by the police, felt itself an integral part of authority, and strengthened its æsthetics with legal means. It was arrogant. The pedant raised to the dignity of policeman, nothing can be so arrogant as that vileness. See, after the struggle between the Arminians and the Gomarists, with what a superb air Sparanus Buyter, his pocket full of Maurice of Nassau's florins, denounces Josse Vondel, and proves, Aristotle in hand, that the *Palamède* of Vondel's tragedy is no other than Barneveldt; useful rhetoric, by which Buyter obtains against Vondel a fine of three hundred crowns, and for himself a fat prebend at Dordrecht.

The author of the book "*Querelles littéraires*," the Abbé Irail, canon of Monistrol, asks of La Beaumelle, "Why do you insult M. de Voltaire so much?" "It is because it sells well," replies La Beaumelle. And Voltaire, informed of the question and of the reply, concludes:—"It is just; the booby buys the writing, and the minister buys the writer. It sells well."

Françoise d'Issembourg de Happoncourt, wife of François Hugo, chamberlain of Lorraine, and very celebrated under the name of Madame de Graffigny, writes to M. Devaux, reader to King Stanislaus: "My dear Pampan, Atys being far off (read: Voltaire being banished), the police cause to be published against him a swarm of small writings and pamphlets, which are sold at a sou in the *cafés* and theatres. That would displease the marquise,* if it did not please the king."

Desfontaines, that other insulter of Voltaire, by whom he had been taken out of Bicêtre, said to the Abbé Prévost, who advised him to make his peace with the philosopher—"If Algiers did not make war, Algiers would die of famine."

This Desfontaines, also an abbé, died of dropsy, and

* Madame de Pompadour.

his well-known tastes gained for him this name—*Periit aquâ qui meruit igne.*

Among the publications suppressed in the last century by decree of Parliament, can be observed a document printed by Quinet and Besogne, and destroyed doubtless because of the revelations it contained, and of which the title gave promise: *L'Arétinade, ou Tarif des Libellistes et Gens de lettres Injurieux.*

Madame de Staël, sent in exile forty-five leagues from Paris, stops exactly at the forty-five leagues—at Beaumont-sur-Loire—and thence writes to her friends. Here is a fragment of a letter addressed to Madame Gay, mother of the illustrious Madame de Girardin: "Ah, dear madame, what a persecution are these exiles!" (We suppress some lines.) "You write a book; it is forbidden to speak of it. Your name in the journals displeases. Permission is, however, fully given to speak ill of it."

CHAPTER III.

SOMETIMES the diatribe is sprinkled with quicklime.

All those black pen-nibs finish by digging ill-omened ditches.

Among the writers abhorred for having been useful, Voltaire and Rousseau hold a conspicuous rank. They have been torn alive, mangled when dead. To have a bite at these renowned ones was a splendid deed, and reckoned as such in favour of literary sbirri. A man who insulted Voltaire was at once promoted to the dignity of pedant. Men in power encouraged the men of the libel to do it. A swarm of musquitoes have rushed upon those two illustrious minds, and are yet buzzing.

Voltaire is the most hated, being the greatest. Everything was good for an attack on him, everything was a pretext. Mesdames de France, Newton, Madame du Châtelet, the Princess of Prussia, Maupertuis, Frederic, the Encyclopædia, the Academy, even Labarre, Sirven, and Calas. Never a truce. His popularity suggested to Joseph de Maistre this line: "Paris crowned him; Sodom would have banished him." Arouet was translated into *A rouer.** At the house of the Abbess of Nivelles, Princess of the Holy Empire, half recluse and half worldling, and having recourse, it is said, in order to make her cheeks rosy, to the method of the Abbess of Montbazon, charades were played; among others, this one: The first syllable is his fortune; the second should be his

* Deserving of being broken on the wheel.

duty. The word was *Vol-taire.** A celebrated member of the Academy of Sciences, Napoléon Bonaparte, seeing in 1803, in the library of the Institute, in the centre of a crown of laurels, this inscription, *Au grand Voltaire*, scratched with his nail the last three letters, leaving only, *Au grand Volta!*

There is round Voltaire particularly a *cordon sanitaire* of priests, the Abbé Desfontaines at the head, the Abbé Nicolardot at the tail. Fréron, although a layman, is a critic after the priestly fashion, and belongs to this band.

Voltaire made his first appearance at the Bastille. His cell was next to the dungeon in which had died Bernard Palissy. Young, he tasted the prison; old, exile. He was kept twenty-seven years away from Paris.

Jean-Jacques, wild and rather surly, was tormented in consequence of those traits in his nature. Paris issued a writ against his person; Geneva expelled him; Neufchâtel rejected him; Motiers-Travers damned him; Bienne stoned him; Berne gave him the choice between prison and expulsion; London, hospitable London, scoffed at him.

Both died, following closely on each other. Death caused no interruption to the outrages. A man is dead; insult does not slacken pursuit for such a trifle. Hatred can feast on a corpse. Libels continued, falling furiously on these glories.

The Revolution came and sent them to the Pantheon.

At the beginning of this century, children were often brought to see these two graves. They were told, "It is here." That made a strong impression on their mind. They carried for ever in their thought that apparition of two sepulchres side by side; the elliptical arch of the vault, the antique form of the two monuments provisionally covered with wood

* *Vol* meaning *theft*, *taire* meaning *to be silent.*

painted like marble; these two names, ROUSSEAU, VOLTAIRE, in the twilight, and the arm carrying a flambeau which was thrust out of the tomb of Jean-Jacques.

Louis XVIII. returned. The restoration of the Stuarts had torn Cromwell from his grave; the restoration of the Bourbons could not do less for Voltaire.

One night, in May, 1814, about two o'clock in the morning, a cab stopped near the barrier of La Gare, which faces Bercy, at the door of an enclosure of planks. This enclosure surrounded a large vacant piece of ground, reserved for the projected *entrepôt*, and belonging to the city of Paris. The cab was coming from the Pantheon, and the coachman had been ordered to take the most deserted streets. The closed planking opened. Some men alighted from the cab and entered the enclosure. Two carried a sack between them. They were conducted, so tradition asserts, by the Marquis of Puymaurin, afterwards deputy to the invisible chamber, and director of the mint, accompanied by his brother, the Comte de Puymaurin. Other men, many in cassocks, were waiting for them. They proceeded towards a hole dug in the middle of the field. This hole, according to one of the witnesses, who has been since waiter at the inn of the *Marronniers* at *la Rapée*, was round, and looked like a blind well. At the bottom of the hole was quicklime. These men said nothing, and had no light. The wan break of day gave a ghastly light. The sack was opened. It was full of bones. These were, pell-mell, the bones of Jean Jacques and of Voltaire, which had just been withdrawn from the Pantheon. The mouth of the sack was brought close to the hole, and the bones were thrown into that darkness. The two skulls struck against each other; a spark, not likely to be seen by such men as those present, was doubtless exchanged between the head

that had made the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* and the head which had made the *Contrct Social*, and reconciled them. When that was done, when the sack had been shaken, when Voltaire and Rousseau had been emptied into that hole, a digger seized a spade, threw inside the opening all the earth which was at the side, and filled up the hole. The others stamped with their feet on the ground, so as to remove from it the appearance of having been freshly disturbed, one of the assistants took for his trouble the sack, as the hangman takes the clothing of his victim, they all left the enclosure, closed the door, got into the cab without saying a word, and hastily, before the sun had risen, those men got away.

CHAPTER IV.

SAUMAISE, that worse Scaliger, does not comprehend Æschylus, and rejects him. Who is to blame? Saumaise much, Æschylus little.

The attentive man who reads great works feels at times, in the middle of reading, certain sudden fits of cold followed by a kind of excess of heat.—"I no longer understand."—"I understand!"—shivering and burning, something which causes him to be a little upset, at the same time that he is very much struck; only minds of the first order, only men of supreme genius, subject to heedless wanderings in the infinite, give to the reader this singular sensation, stupor for most, ecstasy for a few. These few are the *élite*. As we have already observed, this *élite*, gathered from century to century, and always adding to itself, at last makes up a number, becomes in time a multitude, and composes the supreme crowd, the definitive public of men of genius, sovereign like them.

It is with that public that at the end one must deal.

Nevertheless, there is another public, other appraisers, other judges, to whom we have lately alluded. They are not content.

The men of genius, the great minds, this Æschylus, this Isaiah, this Juvenal, this Dante, this Shakespeare, are beings, imperious, tumultuous, violent, passionate, extreme riders of winged steeds, "overleaping all boundaries," having their own goal, which "goes beyond the goal," "exaggerated," taking scan-

dalous strides, flying abruptly from one idea to another, and from the north pole to the south pole, crossing the heavens in three steps, making little allowance for short breaths, tossed about by all the winds, and at the same time full of some unaccountable equestrian confidence amidst their bounds across the abyss, untractable to the "aristarchs," refractory to state rhetoric, not amiable to asthmatical literati, unsubdued to academic hygiene, preferring the foam of Pegasus to asses' milk.

The worthy pedants are kind enough to be afraid for them. The ascent gives rise to the calculation of the fall. The compassionate cripples lament for Shakespeare. He is mad, he mounts too high! The crowd of college fags, they are a crowd, look on in wonder and get angry. Æschylus and Dante make their connoisseurs blink their eyes every moment. This Æschylus is lost! This Dante is near falling! A god is soaring above, the worthy cockneys cry out to him, "Mind yourself!"

CHAPTER V.

BESIDES, these men of genius disconcert.

One knows not on what to rely with them. Their lyric fever obeys them; they interrupt it when they like. They seem wild. All at once they stop. Their frenzy becomes melancholy. They are seen among the precipices, alighting on a peak and folding their wings, and then they give way to meditation. Their meditation is not less surprising than their transport. Just now they were soaring above, now they sink below. But it is always the same boldness.

They are pensive giants. Their Titanic revelry needs the absolute and the unfathomable to expand. They have thought, as the sun has rays, with the abyss around them.

Their moving to and fro in the ideal gives the vertigo. Nothing is too lofty for them, and nothing too low. They pass from the pigmy to the Cyclops, from Polyphemus to the Myrmidons, from Queen Mab to Caliban, and from a love affair to a deluge, and from Saturn's ring to the doll of a little child. *Sinite parvulos venire.* One of the pupils of their eye is a telescope, the other a microscope. They investigate familiarly these two frightful inverse depths, the infinitely great and the infinitely small.

And one should not be angry with them! and one should not reproach them for all this! Indeed! Where should we go if such excesses were to be tolerated? What! No scruple in the choice of subjects, horrible or sad, and always the idea, even if it be disquieting and formidable, followed up to its extremity,

without pity for their fellow-creatures. These poets only see their own aim. And in everything an immoderate way of doing things. What is Job? a worm on an ulcer. What is the *Divina Commedia?* a series of torments. What is the Iliad? a collection of plagues and wounds. Not an artery cut, which is not complaisantly described. Go round for opinions on Homer; ask of Scaliger, Terrasson, Lamotte, what they think of him. The fourth of an ode to the shield of Achilles—what intemperance! He who does not know when to stop never knew how to write. These poets agitate, disturb, trouble, upset, overwhelm, make everything shiver, break things, occasionally, here and there; they can cause great misfortunes, it is terrible. Thus speak the Athenæa, the Sorbonnes, the sworn-in professors, the societies called learned, Saumaise, successor of Scaliger at the university of Leyden, and the *bourgeoisie* after them, all who represent in literature and art the great party of order. What can be more logical? The cough quarrels with the hurricane.

Those who are poor in wit are joined by those who have too much wit. The sceptics lend assistance to the fools. Men of genius, with few exceptions, are proud and stern; that is in the very marrow of their bones. They have in company with them Juvenal, Agrippa d'Aubigné, and Milton; they are prone to harshness; they despise the *panem et circenses;* they seldom grow sociable, and growl. People rail at them in a pleasant way. Well done.

Ah, poet! Ah, Milton! Ah, Juvenal! Ah, you keep up resistance! ah, you perpetuate disinterestedness! ah, you bring together these two firebrands—faith and will—in order to make the flame burst out from them! ah, there is something of the Vestal in you, old grumbler! ah, you have an altar, your country! ah, you have a tripod—the ideal! ah, you believe in the rights of man, in emancipation, in the

future, in progress, in the beautiful, in the just, in what is great! Take care; you are behindhand. All this virtue is infatuation. You emigrate with honour; but you emigrate. This heroism is no longer the fashion. It no longer suits our epoch. There comes a moment when the sacred fire is no longer fashionable. Poet, you believe in right and truth; you are behind your century. Your very eternity causes you to pass away.

So much the worse, without doubt, for those grumbling geniuses accustomed to greatness, and scornful of what is no longer so. They are slow in movement when shame is at stake; their back is struck with anchylosis for anything like bowing and cringing; when success passes along, deserved or not, but saluted, they have an iron bar keeping their vertebral column stiff. That is their affair. So much the worse for those people of old-fashioned Rome. They belong to antiquity and to antique manners. To bristle up at every turn may have been all very well in former days; those long bristling manes are no longer worn; the lions are out of fashion now. The French Revolution is nearly seventy-five years old. At that age dotage comes. The people of the present time mean to belong to their day, and even to their minute. Certainly, we find no fault with it. Whatever is, must be. It is quite right that what exists should exist. The forms of public prosperity are various. One generation is not obliged to imitate another. Cato copied Phocion; Trimalcion is less like, it is independence. You bad-tempered old fellows, you wish us to emancipate ourselves? Let it be so. We disencumber ourselves of the imitation of Timoleon, Thraseas, Artevelde, Thomas More, Hampden. It is our fashion to free ourselves. You wish for a revolt, there it is. You wish for no insurrection, we rise up against our rights. We affranchise ourselves from the care of being free. To be citizens

is a heavy load. Rights entangled with obligations are restraints to whoever desires to enjoy life quietly. To be guided by conscience and truth in all the steps that we take is fatiguing. We mean to walk without leading-strings and without principles. Duty is a chain; we break our irons. What do you mean by speaking to us of Franklin? Franklin is a rather too servile copy of Aristides. We carry our horror of servility so far as to prefer Grimod de la Reynière. To eat and drink well, there is purpose in that. Each epoch has its peculiar manner of being free. Orgy is a liberty. This way of reasoning is triumphant, to adhere to it is wise. There have been, it is true, epochs when people thought otherwise; in those times the things which were trodden on would sometimes resent it, and would rebel; but that was the ancient system, ridiculous now, and those who regret and grumble must be left to talk and to affirm that there was a better notion of right, justice, and honour in the stones of olden times than in the men of to-day.

The rhetoricians, official and officious—we have pointed out already their wonderful sagacity—take strong precautions against men of genius. Men of genius are not great followers of the university; what is more, they are wanting in insipidity. They are lyrics, colorists, enthusiasts, enchanters, possessed, exalted, "rabid"—we have read the word—beings who, when everybody is small, have a mania for creating great things; in fact, they have every vice. A doctor has recently discovered that genius is a variety of madness. They are Michael Angelo handling giants; Rembrandt painting with a palette all bedaubed with the sun's rays; they are Dante, Rabelais, Shakespeare, exaggerated. They bring a wild art, roaring, flaming, dishevelled like the lion and the comet. Oh! shocking! There is coalition against them, and it is right. We have, luckily, the "teetotallers" of eloquence and poetry. "I like paleness," said one day a literary

bourgeois. The literary *bourgeois* exists. Rhetoricians, anxious on account of the contagions and fevers which are spread by genius, recommend with a lofty reason, which we have commended, temperance, moderation, "common sense," the art of keeping within bounds, writers expurgated, trimmed, pruned, regulated, the worship of the qualities that the malignant call negative, continence, abstinence, Joseph, Scipio, the water-drinkers. It is all excellent; only young students must be warned that by following these sage precepts too closely they run the risk of glorifying the chastity of the eunuch. May be, I admire Bayard; I admire Origen less.

CHAPTER VI.

RÉSUMÉ: Great minds are importunate; to deny them a little is judicious.

After all, let us admit it at last, and complete our statement; there is some truth in the reproaches that are hurled at them. This anger is natural. The powerful, the grand, the luminous, are in a certain point of view things calculated to offend. To be surpassed is never agreeable; to feel one's own inferiority leads surely to feel offence. The beautiful exists so truly by itself that it certainly has no need of pride; nevertheless, given human mediocrity, the beautiful humiliates at the same time that it enchants: it seems natural that beauty should be a vase for pride, it is supposed full of it, one seeks to avenge oneself for the pleasure it gives, and this word *superb* ends by having two senses, one of which causes suspicion of the other. It is the fault of the beautiful, as we have already said. It wearies—a sketch by Piranesi bewilders you; a grasp of the hand of Hercules bruises you. Greatness is sometimes in the wrong. It is ingenuous, but obstructive. The tempest thinks to sprinkle you, it drowns you; the star thinks to give light, it dazzles, sometimes blinds. The Nile fertilizes, but overflows. The "too much" is not convenient; the habitation of the fathomless is rude; the infinite is little suitable for a lodging. A cottage is badly situated on the cataract of Niagara or in the circus of Gavarnie; it is awkward to keep house with these fierce wonders; to frequent them regularly without being overwhelmed, one must be a cretin or a genius.

The dawn itself at times seems to us immoderate: he who looks at it straight suffers; the eye at certain moments thinks very ill of the sun. Let us not then be astonished at the complaints made, at the incessant objections, at the fits of passion and prudence, at the cataplasms applied by a certain criticism, at the ophthalmies habitual to academies and teaching bodies, at the warnings given to the reader, at all the curtains let down, and at all the shades used against genius. Genius is intolerant without knowing it, because it is itself. How can people be familiar with Æschylus, with Ezekiel, with Dante?

The I is the right to egotism. Now the first thing that those beings do, is to use roughly the I of each one. Exorbitant in everything, in thoughts, in images, in convictions, in emotions, in passions, in faith, whatever may be the side of your I to which they address themselves, they inconvenience it. Your intellect, they surpass it; your imagination, they dazzle it; your conscience, they question and search it; your bowels, they twist them; your heart, they break it; your soul, they carry it off.

The infinite that is in them passes from them and multiplies them, and transfigures them before your eyes every moment; formidable fatigue for your gaze. With them you never know where you are. At every turn the unforeseen. You expected only men, they cannot enter your room, for they are giants; you expected only an idea, cast your eyes down, they are the ideal; you expected only eagles, they have six wings, they are seraphs. Are they then beyond nature? Is it that humanity fails them?

Certainly not, and far from that, and quite the reverse. We have already said it, and we insist on it, nature and humanity are in them more than in any other beings. They are superhuman men, but men. *Homo sum.* This word of a poet sums up all poetry. St. Paul strikes his breast and says "*Peccamus.*" Job

tells you who he is—"I am the son of woman." They are men. That which troubles you is that they are men more than you; they are too much men, so to speak. There where you have but the part, they have the whole; they carry in their vast heart entire humanity, and they are *you* more than yourself; you recognise yourself too much in their work; hence your outcry. To that total of nature, to that complete humanity, to that potter's clay, which is all your flesh, and which is at the same time the whole earth, they add, and it completes your terror, the wonderful reverberation of the unknown. They have vistas of revelation, and suddenly, and without crying "Beware," at the moment when you least expect it, they burst the cloud, make in the zenith a gap whence falls a ray, and they light up the terrestrial with the celestial. It is very natural that people should not greatly fancy familiar intercourse with them, and should have no taste for keeping neighbourly intimacy with them.

Whoever has not a soul well tempered by vigorous education avoids them willingly. For colossal books there must be athletic readers. It is necessary to be strong and healthy to open Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Job, Pindar, Lucretius, and that Alighieri and that Shakespeare. Homely habits, prosy life, the dead calm of consciences, "good taste" and "common sense," all the small placid egotism is deranged, let us own it, by these monsters of the sublime.

Yet, when one dives in and reads them, nothing is more hospitable for the mind at certain hours than these stern spirits. They have all at once a lofty gentleness, as unexpected as the rest. They say to you, Come in. They receive you at home with a fraternity of archangels. They are affectionate, sad, melancholy, consoling. You are suddenly at your ease. You feel yourself loved by them; you almost imagine yourself personally known to them. Their sternness and their pride cover a profound sympathy;

if granite had a heart, how deep would its goodness be! Well, genius is granite with goodness. Extreme power possesses great love. They join you in your prayers. They know well, those men, that God exists. Apply your ear to these giants, you will hear them palpitate. Do you want to believe, to love, to weep, to strike your breast, to fall on your knees, to raise your hands to heaven with confidence and serenity, listen to these poets, they will aid you to rise towards the healthy and fruitful sorrow, they will make you feel the celestial use of emotion. Oh, goodness of the strong! their emotion, which, if they will, can be an earthquake, is at moments so cordial and so gentle that it seems like the rocking of a cradle. They have just given birth within you to something of which they take care. There is maternity in genius. Take a step, advance farther, a new surprise awaits you; they are graceful. As for their grace, it is light itself.

The high mountains have on their sides all climates, and the great poets all styles. It is sufficient to change the zone. Go up, it is the tempest; descend, the flowers are there. The inner fire accommodates itself to the winter without, the glacier has no objection to be the crater, and the lava never looks more beautiful than when it rushes out through the snow. A sudden blaze of flame is not strange on a polar summit. This contact of the extremes is a law in nature, in which the unforeseen wonders of the sublime burst forth at every moment. A mountain, a genius, both are austere majesty. These masses evolve a sort of religious intimidation. Dante is not less perpendicular than Etna. The depths of Shakespeare equal the gulfs of Chimborazo. The peaks of poets are not less cloudy than the summits of mountains. Thunders are rolling there, and at the same time, in the valleys, in the passes, in the sheltered spots, in places between escarpments, are streams,

birds, nests, boughs, enchantments, wonderful Floræ. Above the frightful arch of the Aveyron, in the middle of the frozen sea, there is that paradise called "The Garden"—have you seen it? What an episode! A hot sun, a shade tepid and fresh, a vague exudation of perfumes on the grass-plots, an indescribable month of May perpetually reigning among precipices. Nothing is more tender and more exquisite. Such are poets: such are the Alps. These huge old gloomy mountains are marvellous growers of roses and violets; they avail themselves of the dawn and of the dew better than all your prairies and all your hillocks can do it, although it is their natural business; the April of the plain is flat and vulgar compared with their April, and they have, those immense old mountains, in their wildest ravine, their own charming spring, well known to the bees.

BOOK IV.

CRITICISM.

CHAPTER I.

Every play of Shakespeare's, two excepted, "Macbeth" and "Romeo and Juliet," thirty-four plays out of thirty-six, offers to our observation one peculiarity which seems to have escaped, up to this day, the most eminent commentators and critics, one that the Schlegels and M. Villemain himself, in his remarkable labours, do not notice, and on which it is impossible not to give an opinion. It is a double action which traverses the drama and reflects it on a small scale. By the side of the storm in the Atlantic, the storm in the tea-cup. Thus Hamlet makes beneath himself a Hamlet; he kills Polonius, father of Laërtes, and there is Laërtes opposite him exactly in the same situation as he is towards Claudius. There are two fathers to avenge. There might be two ghosts. So, in King Lear, side by side and simultaneously, Lear, driven to despair by his daughters Goneril and Regan, and consoled by his daughter Cordelia, is reflected by Gloster, betrayed by his son Edmond, and loved by his son Edgar. The bifurcated idea, the idea echoing itself, a lesser drama copying and elbowing the principal drama, the action trailing its own shadow, a smaller action but its parallel; the unity cut asunder, surely it is a strange fact. These twin

actions have been strongly blamed by the few commentators who have pointed them out. We do not participate in their blame. Do we then approve and accept as good these twin actions? By no means. We recognise them, and that is all. The drama of Shakespeare, we said so with all our might as far back as 1827,* in order to discourage all imitation, the drama of Shakespeare is peculiar to Shakespeare; it is a drama inherent to this poet; it is his own essence; it is himself. Thence his originalities absolutely personal; thence his idiosyncrasies, which exist without establishing a law.

These twin actions are purely Shakespearian. Neither Æschylus nor Molière would admit them, and we certainly would agree with Æschylus and Molière.

These twin actions are, moreover, the sign of the sixteenth century. Each epoch has its own mysterious stamp. The centuries have a seal that they affix to *chefs-d'œuvre,* and which it is necessary to know how to decipher and recognise. The seal of the sixteenth century is not the seal of the eighteenth. The renaissance was a subtle time, a time of reflection. The spirit of the sixteenth century was reflected in a mirror. Every idea of the renaissance has a double compartment. Look at the jubes in the churches. The renaissance, with an exquisite and fantastical art, always makes the Old Testament repercussive on the New. The twin action is there in everything. The symbol explains the personage in repeating his gesture. If, in a basso-relievo, Jehovah sacrifices his son, he has close by, in the next low relief, Abraham sacrificing his son. Jonas passes three days in the whale, and Jesus passes three days in the sepulchre, and the jaws of the monster swallowing Jonas answer to the mouth of hell engulfing Jesus.

* Preface to "Cromwell."

The carver of the jube of Fécamp, so stupidly demolished, goes so far as to give for counterpart to St. Joseph—whom? Amphitryon.

These singular results constitute one of the habits of that profound and searching high art of the sixteenth century. Nothing can be more curious in that style than the part ascribed to St. Christopher. In the middle ages, and in the sixteenth century, in paintings and sculptures, St. Christopher, the good giant martyred by Decius in 250, recorded by the Bollandists and acknowledged without a question by Baillet, is always triple, an opportunity for the triptych. There is foremost a first Christ-bearer, a first Christophorus, that is Christopher, with the infant Jesus on his shoulders. Afterwards the Virgin enceinte is a Christopher, since she carries Christ; last, the cross is a Christopher; it also carries Christ. This treble illustration of the idea is immortalized by Rubens in the cathedral of Antwerp. The twin idea, the triple idea, such the seal of the sixteenth century.

Shakespeare, faithful to the spirit of his time, must needs add Laërtes avenging his father to Hamlet avenging his father, and cause Hamlet to be persecuted by Laërtes at the same time that Claudius is pursued by Hamlet; he must needs make the filial piety of Edgar a comment on the filial piety of Cordelia, and bring out in contrast, weighed down by the ingratitude of unnatural children, two wretched fathers, each bereaved of one kind light, Lear mad and Gloster blind.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT then? No criticizing? No. No blame? No. You explain everything? Yes. Genius is an entity like nature, and requires, like nature, to be accepted purely and simply. A mountain must be accepted as such or left alone. There are men who would make a criticism on the Himalayas, pebble by pebble. Mount Etna blazes and slavers, throws out its glare, its wrath, its lava, and its ashes; these men take scales and weigh those ashes, pinch by pinch. *Quot libras in monte summo?* Meanwhile genius continues its eruption. Everything in it has its reason for existing. It is because it is. Its shadow is the inverse of its light. Its smoke comes from its flame. Its depth is the result of its height. We love this more and that less; but we remain silent wherever we feel God. We are in the forest; the tortuosity of the tree is its secret. The sap knows what it is doing. The root knows its own business. We take things as they are; we are indulgent for that which is excellent, tender, or magnificent; we acquiesce in *chefs-d'œuvre;* we do not make use of one to find fault with the other; we do not insist upon Phidias sculpturing cathedrals, or upon Pinaigrier glazing temples; the temple is the harmony, the cathedral is the mystery; they are two different forms of the sublime: we do not claim for the Münster the perfection of the Parthenon, or for the Parthenon the grandeur of the Münster. We are so far whimsical as to be satisfied with both being beautiful. We do not reproach for its sting the insect that gives us honey. We renounce our right to criti-

cize the feet of the peacock, the cry of the swan, the plumage of the nightingale, the butterfly for having been caterpillar, the thorn of the rose, the smell of the lion, the skin of the elephant, the prattle of the cascade, the pips of the orange, the immobility of the Milky Way, the saltness of the ocean, the spots on the sun, the nakedness of Noah.

The *quandoque bonus dormitat* is permitted to Horace. We raise no objection. What is certain is, that Homer would not say it of Horace. He would not take the trouble. Himself the eagle, Homer would find charming, indeed, Horace the chattering humming-bird. I grant it is pleasant to a man to feel himself superior, and say, "Homer is puerile, Dante is childish." It is indulging in a pretty smile. To crush these poor geniuses a little, why not? To be the Abbé Trublet, and say "Milton is a schoolboy," it is pleasing. How witty is the man who finds that Shakespeare has no wit! That man is La Harpe, Delandine, Auger; he is, was, or shall be, an Academician. *All these great men are made up of extravagance, bad taste, and childishness.* What a fine decree to issue! These fashions tickle voluptuously those who have them; and, in reality, when they have said "This giant is small," they can fancy that they are great. Every man has his own way. As for myself, the writer of these lines, I admire everything like a fool.

That is why I have written this book.

To admire. To be an enthusiast. It has struck me that it was right to give in our century this example of folly.

CHAPTER III.

Do not look, then, for any criticism. I admire Æschylus, I admire Juvenal, I admire Dante, in the mass, in a lump, all. I do not cavil at those great benefactors. What you characterize as a fault, I call accent. I accept and give thanks. I do not inherit the marvels of human wit conditionally. Pegasus being given to me, I do not look the gift-horse in the mouth. A *chef-d'œuvre* is hospitality. I enter there with my hat off: I think the visage of mine host handsome. Gilles Shakespeare, maybe. I admire Shakespeare and I admire Gilles. Falstaff is proposed to me. I accept him, and I admire the "Empty the jorden." I admire the senseless cry, "A rat!" I admire the jests of Hamlet, I admire the wholesale murders of Macbeth, I admire the witches, "that ridiculous spectacle," I admire "the buttock of the night," I admire the eye plucked from Gloster. I am simple enough to admire all.

Having recently had the honour to be called "silly" by several distinguished writers and critics, and even by my illustrious friend M. de Lamartine,* I am determined to justify the epithet.

We close with one last observation which we have specially to make regarding Shakespeare.

Orestes, that fatal senior of Hamlet, is not, as we have said, the sole link between Æschylus and Shakespeare; we have noted a relation, less easily percep-

* "All the biography, sometimes rather puerile, even rather silly, of Bishop Myriel." Lamartine: *Cours de Littérature.* Entretien lxxxiv. p. 385.

tible, between Prometheus and Hamlet. The mysterious close connexion between the two poets is, in reference to this same Prometheus, more strangely striking yet, and in a particular which, up to this time, has escaped the observers and critics. Prometheus is the grandsire of Mab.

Let us prove it.

Prometheus, like all personages become legendary, like Solomon, like Cæsar, like Mahomet, like Charlemagne, like the Cid, like Joan of Arc, like Napoleon, has a double prolongation, the one in history, the other in fable. Now the prolongation of Prometheus is this:

Prometheus, creator of men, is also creator of spirits. He is father of a dynasty of Dives, whose filiation the old fabliaux have preserved: Elf, that is to say, the Rapid, son of Prometheus, then Elfin, King of India, then Elfinan, founder of Cleopolis, town of the fairies, then Elfilin, builder of the golden wall, then Elfinell, winner of the battle of the demons, then Elfant, who made Panthea entirely in crystal, then Elfar, who killed Bicephalus and Tricephalus, then Elfinor, the magian, a kind of Salmoneus, who built over the sea a bridge of copper, sounding like thunder, "*non imitabile fulmen ære et cornipedum pulsú simularat equorum*," then seven hundred princes, then Elficleos the Sage, then Elferon the Beautiful, then Oberon, then Mab. Wonderful fable, which, with a profound meaning, unites the sidereal and the microscopic, the infinitely great and the infinitely small.

And it is thus that the infusoria of Shakespeare is connected with the gigantic of Æschylus.

The fairy, drawn over the nose of sleeping men in her carriage, covered with the wing of a locust, by eight flies harnessed with the rays of the moon, and whipped with a gossamer, the fairy atom has for ancestor the huge Titan, robber of stars, nailed on the Caucasus, one hand on the Caspian gates, the other on the por-

tals of Ararat, one heel on the source of the Phasis, the other on the Validus-Murus, closing the passage between the mountain and the sea, Colossus, whose immense shadow was, according as the rise or setting of light, projected by the sun, now on Europe, as far as Corinth, now on Asia, as far as Bangalore.

Nevertheless, Mab, who is also called *Tanaquil*, has all the wavering inconsistency of the dream. Under the name of Tanaquil she is the wife of Tarquin the Ancient, and she spins for young Servius Tullius the first tunic worn by a young Roman after leaving off the pretexta; Oberon, who turns out to be Numa, is her uncle. In *Huon de Bordeaux* she is called Gloriande, and has for lover Julius Cæsar, and Oberon is her son; in Spenser, she is called Gloriana, and Oberon is her father; in Shakespeare she is called Titania, and Oberon is her husband. Titania, this name unites Mab to the Titan, and Shakespeare to Æschylus.

CHAPTER IV.

An eminent man of our day, a celebrated historian, a powerful orator, one of the former translators of Shakespeare, is mistaken, according to our views, when he regrets, or appears to regret, the slight influence of Shakespeare on the theatre of the nineteenth century. We cannot share that regret. An influence of any sort, even that of Shakespeare, could but mar the originality of the literary movement of our epoch. "The system of Shakespeare," says the honourable and grave writer, with reference to that movement, "can furnish, it seems to me, the plans after which genius must henceforth work." We have never been of that opinion, and we have said so as far back as forty years ago.* For us Shakespeare is a genius, and not a system. On this point we have already explained our views, and we mean soon to explain them at greater length, but let us state at once that what Shakespeare has done is done once for all. There is no reverting to it. Admire or criticize, but do not re-cast. It is cast.

A distinguished critic who lately died, M. Chaudesaigues, lays a stress on this reproach: "Shakespeare," says he, "has been revived without being followed. The romantic school has not imitated Shakespeare. In that it is wrong." In that it is right. It is blamed for it, we praise it. The contemporary theatre is what it is, but it is itself. The contemporary theatre has for device, *Sum, non sequor.* It belongs to

* Preface to "Cromwell."

no "system." It has its own law, and it accomplishes it. It has its own life, and it lives it.

The drama of Shakespeare expresses man at a given moment. Man passes away, that drama remains, having, for eternal foundation, life, the heart, the world, and for surface the sixteenth century. That drama can neither be continued nor recomposed. Another age, another art.

The theatre of our day has not followed Shakespeare any more than it has followed Æschylus. And without reckoning all the other reasons that we shall note farther on, how perplexed would he be who wished to imitate and copy, in making a choice between these two poets. Æschylus and Shakespeare seem made to prove that contraries may be admirable. The point of departure for the one is absolutely opposite to the point of departure of the other. Æschylus is concentration, Shakespeare is diffusion. One must be much applauded because he is condensed, and the other because he is diffuse; to Æschylus unity, to Shakespeare ubiquity. Between them they divide God. And, as such intellects are always complete, one feels, in the drama unit of Æschylus, the free agitation of passion, and in the diffuse drama of Shakespeare the convergence of all the rays of life. The one starts from unity and reaches a multiple, the other starts from the multiple and arrives at unity.

This bursts on us with striking evidence when we compare "Hamlet" with "Orestes." Extraordinary double page, recto and verso of the same idea, and which seems written expressly to prove to what an extent two different geniuses, making the same thing, will make two different things.

It is easy to see that the theatre of our day has, rightly or wrongly, traced out its own way between Greek unity and Shakespearian ubiquity.

CHAPTER V.

Let us set aside for the present the question of contemporary art, and take up again the general question.

Imitation is always barren and bad.

As for Shakespeare, since Shakespeare is the poet who claims our attention now, he is, in the highest degree, a genius human and general; but, like every true genius, he is at the same time an idiosyncratic and personal mind. Axiom: the poet starts from his own inner self to come to us. It is that which makes the poet inimitable.

Examine Shakespeare, dive into him and see how determined he is to be himself. Do not expect any concession from his own self. It is not egotism, but it is stubbornness. He wills it. He gives to art his orders, of course in the limits of his work. For neither the art of Æschylus, nor the art of Aristophanes, nor the art of Plautus, nor the art of Macchiavelli, nor the art of Calderon, nor the art of Molière, nor the art of Beaumarchais, nor any of the forms of art, deriving life each of them from the special life of a genius, would obey the orders given by Shakespeare. Art thus understood is vast equality and profound liberty; the region of the equals is also the region of the free.

One of the grandeurs of Shakespeare consists in his impossibility to be a model. In order to realize his idiosyncrasy, open one of his plays, no matter which, it is always foremost and above all Shakespeare.

What more personal than "Troilus and Cressida?"

A comic Troy! Here is "Much Ado about Nothing"—a tragedy which ends with a burst of laughter. Here is the "Winter's Tale"—a pastoral drama. Shakespeare is at home in his work. Do you wish to see true despotism, look at his fancy. What arbitrary determination to dream! What despotic resolution in his vertiginous flight! What absoluteness in his indecision and wavering! The dream fills some of his plays to that degree that man changes his nature, and is the cloud more than the man. Angelo in "Measure for Measure" is a misty tyrant. He becomes disintegrated, and wears away. Leontes in the "Winter's Tale" is an Othello who is blown away. In "Cymbeline" one thinks that Iachimo will become an Iago, but he melts down. The dream is there, everywhere. Watch Manilius, Posthumus, Hermione, Perdita, passing by. In the "Tempest," the Duke of Milan has "a brave son," who is like a dream in a dream. Ferdinand alone speaks of him, and no one but Ferdinand seems to have seen him. A brute becomes reasonable, witness the constable Elbow in "Measure for Measure." An idiot is all at once witty, witness Cloten in "Cymbeline." A king of Sicily is jealous of a king of Bohemia. Bohemia has a sea-shore. The shepherds pick up children there. Theseus, a duke, espouses Hippolyta, the Amazon. Oberon comes in also. For here it is Shakespeare's will to dream; elsewhere he thinks.

We say more, where he dreams, he still thinks; with a different but equal depth.

Let men of genius remain in peace in their originality. There is something wild in these mysterious civilizers. Even in their comedy, even in their buffoonery, even in their laughter, even in their smile, there is the unknown. In them is felt the sacred dread that belongs to art, and the all-powerful terror of the imaginary mixed with the real. Each of them

is in his cavern, alone. They hear each another from afar, but never copy one another. We are not aware that the hippopotamus imitates the roar of the elephant.

Lions do not ape each other.

Diderot does not recast Bayle; Beaumarchais does not copy Plautus, and has no need of Davus to create Figaro. Piranesi is not inspired by Dædalus. Isaiah does not begin Moses over again.

One day, at St. Helena, M. De Las Cases said, "Sire, when you were master of Prussia, I would in your place have taken the sword of Frederick the Great, which is deposited in the tomb at Potsdam, and I would have worn it." "Fool," replied Napoleon, "I had my own."

Shakespeare's work is absolute, sovereign, imperious, eminently solitary, unneighbourly, sublime in radiance, absurd in reflection, and must remain without a copy.

To imitate Shakespeare would be as insane as to imitate Racine would be stupid.

CHAPTER VI.

Let us agree, by the way, respecting a qualificative much used everywhere, *profanum vulgus*, the saying of a poet on which pedants lay great stress. This *profanum vulgus* is rather the weapon of everybody. Let us fix the meaning of this worn. What is the *profanum vulgus?* The school says "It is the people." And we, we say "It is the school."

But let us first define this expression, the school. When we say, the school, what must be understood? Let us explain it. The school is the resultant of pedantry; the school is the literary excrescence of the budget; the school is the intellectual mandarinship governing in the various authorized and official teachings, either of the press or of the state, from the theatrical *feuilleton* of the prefecture to the Biographies and Encyclopædias duly examined, stamped and hawked about, and made sometimes, a refinement, by republicans agreeable to the police; the school is the circumvallating classic and scholastic orthodoxy, the Homeric and Virgilian antiquity made use of by *literati* licensed by government, a kind of China self-called Greece; the school is, summed up in one concretion which forms part of public order, all the knowledge of pedagogues, all the history of historiographers, all the poetry of laureates, all the philosophy of sophists, all the criticism of pedants, all the ferule of the "ignorantins," all the religion of bigots, all the modesty of prudes, all the metaphysics of those who change sides, all the justice of placemen, all the old age of the small young men

who have undergone the operation, all the flattery of courtiers, all the diatribes of thurifers, all the independence of valets, all the certainty of short sights and of base souls. The school hates Shakespeare. It detects him in the very act of mingling with the people, going to and fro in public thoroughfares, "trivial," speaking the language of the people, shooting forth the human cry like any other man, welcome to those that he welcomes, applauded by hands black with tar, cheered by all the hoarse throats that proceed from labour and weariness. The drama of Shakespeare is the people; the school is indignant and says *Odi profanum vulgus.* There is demagogy in this poetry roaming at large; the author of Hamlet "panders to the mob."

Let it be so. The poet "panders to the mob."

If anything is great, it is that.

There in the foreground, everywhere, in full light, amidst the flourish of trumpets, are the powerful men followed by the gilded men. The poet does not see them, or, if he does, he disdains them. He lifts his eyes and looks at God; then he lowers his eyes and looks at the people. There in the depth of the shadow, nearly invisible, so much submerged that it is the night, is that fatal crowd, that vast and mournful heap of suffering, that venerable populace of the tattered and of the ignorant. Chaos of souls. That crowd of heads undulates obscurely like the waves of a nocturnal sea. From time to time there pass on that surface, like squalls over the water, catastrophes, a war, a pestilence, a royal favourite, a famine. That causes a disturbance which lasts a short time, the depth of sorrow being immovable as the depth of the ocean. Despair deposits some unknown fearful lead. The last word of the abyss is stupor. Therefore it is the night. It is, under the funeral thickness, behind which all is indistinct, the mournful sea of the needy.

These overloaded beings are silent; they know

nothing; they submit. *Plectuntur Achivi.* They are hungry and cold. Their indecent flesh is seen through the holes in their tatters. Who makes those tatters? The purple. The nakedness of virgins comes from the nudity of odalisques. From the twisted rags of the daughters of the people fall pearls for the Fontanges, and the Châteauroux. It is famine which gilds Versailles. The whole of that living and dying shadow moves, these larvæ are in the pangs of death, the mother's breast is dry, the father has no work, the brains have no light; if there is a book in that destitution, it resembles the pitcher, so insipid or corrupt is what it offers to the thirst of intellects. Mournful families.

The group of the little ones is wan. All that dies away and creeps along, not having even the power to love; and unknown to them perhaps, while they crouch down and resign themselves, from all that vast unconsciousness in which right dwells, from the rumbling murmur of those wretched breaths mingled together, proceeds an indescribable confused voice, mysterious mist of the verb, succeeding, syllable by syllable in the darkness, in uttering extraordinary words; Future, Humanity, Liberty, Equality, Progress. And the poet listens, and he hears; and he looks, and he sees; and he bends lower and lower, and he weeps; and all at once, growing with a strange growth, drawing from all that darkness his own transfiguration, he stands erect, terrible and tender, above all those wretched ones, those above as well as those below, with flaming eyes.

And he demands a reckoning with a loud voice. And he says, Here is the effect! And he says, Here is the cause! Light is the remedy. *Erudimini.* And he looks like a great vase full of humanity shaken by the hand which is in the cloud, and from whence fall on the earth large drops, fire for the oppressors, dew for the oppressed. Ah! you find

fault with that, you fellows. Well then, we approve of it, we do! We find it just that some one speaks when all suffer. The ignorant who enjoy and the ignorant who suffer have an equal want of teaching. The law of fraternity is derived from the law of labour. To kill each other has had its day. The hour has come to love one another. It is to promulgate these truths that the poet is good. For that, he must be of the people; for that he must be of the populace: that is to say, that, bringing progress, he should not recoil before the pressure of facts, however ugly the facts may yet be. The distance between the real and the ideal cannot be measured otherwise. Besides, to drag the cannon-ball a little completes Vincent de Paul. Hurrah then for the trivial promiscuousness, for the popular metaphor, for the great life in common with those exiles from joy who are called the poor. That is the first duty of poets. It is useful, it is necessary, that the breath of the people should fill those all-powerful souls. The people have something to say to them. It is good that there should be in Euripides a flavour of the herb-dealers at Athens, and in Shakespeare of the sailors of London.

Sacrifice to "the mob," O poet! Sacrifice to that unfortunate, disinherited, vanquished, vagabond, shoeless, famished, repudiated, despairing mob; sacrifice to it, if it must be and when it must be, thy repose, thy fortune, thy joy, thy country, thy liberty, thy life. The mob is the human race in misery. The mob is the mournful commencement of the people. The mob is the great victim of darkness. Sacrifice to it! Sacrifice thyself! let thyself be hunted, let thyself be exiled as Voltaire to Ferney, as d'Aubigne to Geneva, as Dante to Verona, as Juvenal to Syene, as Tacitus to Methymna, as Æschylus to Gela, as John to Patmos, as Elias to Horeb, as Thucydides to Thrace, as Isaiah to Esiongeber! Sacrifice to the mob. Sacrifice to it thy gold, and thy blood which

is more than thy gold, and thy thought which is more than thy blood, and thy love which is more than thy thought; sacrifice to it everything except justice. Receive its complaint; listen to its faults, and to the faults of others. Listen to what it has to confess and to denounce to thee. Stretch forth to it the ear, the hand, the arm, the heart. Do everything for it, excepting evil. Alas! it suffers so much, and it knows nothing. Correct it, warn it, instruct it, guide it, bring it up. Put it to the school of honesty. Make it spell truth, show it that alphabet reason, teach it to read virtue, probity, generosity, mercy. Hold thy book wide open. Be there, attentive, vigilant, kind, faithful, humble. Light up the brain, inflame the mind, extinguish egotism, show good example. The poor are privation; be abnegation. Teach! irradiate! they need thee, thou art their great thirst. To learn is the first step; to live is but the second. Be at their order, dost thou hear? Be ever there, light! For it is beautiful, on this sombre earth, during this dark life, short passage to something else, it is beautiful that force should have right for a master, that progress should have courage as a chief, that intelligence should have Honour as a sovereign, that conscience should have duty as a despot, that civilization should have Liberty as a queen, that ignorance should have a servant, Light.

BOOK V.

THE MINDS AND THE MASSES.

CHAPTER I.

For the last eighty years memorable things have been done. A wonderful heap of demolished materials covers the pavement.

What is done is but little by the side of what remains to be done.

To destroy is the task: to build is the work. Progress demolishes with the left hand, it is with the right hand that it builds.

The left hand of progress is called Force, the right hand is called Mind.

There is at this hour a great deal of useful destruction accomplished; all the old cumbersome civilization is, thanks to our fathers, cleared away. It is well, it is finished, it is thrown down, it is on the ground. Now, up with you all, intellects! to work, to labour, to fatigue, to duty; it is necessary to construct.

Here three questions:

To construct what?

To construct where?

To construct how?

We reply:

To construct the people.

To construct the people according to the laws of progress.

To construct the people according to the laws of light.

CHAPTER II.

To work for the people; that is the great and urgent necessity.

The human mind—an important thing to say at this minute—has a greater need of the ideal even than of the real.

It is by the real that we exist, it is by the ideal that we live. Now, do you wish to realize the difference? Animals exist, man lives.

To live, is to understand. To live, is to smile at the present, to look towards posterity over the wall. To live, is to have in oneself a balance, and to weigh in it the good and the evil. To live, is to have justice, truth, reason, devotion, probity, sincerity, common sense, right, and duty nailed to the heart. To live is to know what one is worth, what one can do and should do. Life is conscience. Cato would not rise before Ptolemy. Cato lived.

Literature is the secretion of civilization, poetry of the ideal. That is why literature is one of the wants of societies. That is why poetry is a hunger of the soul.

That is why poets are the first instructors of the people.

That is why Shakespeare must be translated in France.

That is why Molière must be translated in England.

That is why comments must be made on them.

That is why there must be a vast public literary domain.

That is why all poets, all philosophers, all thinkers,

all the producers of the greatness of the mind must be translated, commented on, published, printed, reprinted, stereotyped, distributed, explained, recited, spread abroad, given to all, given cheaply, given at cost price, given for nothing.

Poetry evolves heroism. M. Royer-Collard, that original and ironical friend of routine, was, taken all in all, a wise and noble spirit. Some one we know eard him say one day, "Spartacus is a poet."

That wonderful and consoling Ezekiel—the tragic revealer of progress—has all kinds of singular passages full of a profound meaning :—" The voice said to me : Fill the palm of thy hand with red-hot coals, and spread them on the city." And elsewhere : "The spirit having gone into them, everywhere where the spirit went, they went." And again : "A hand was stretched towards me. It held a roll which was a book. The voice said to me : Eat this roll. I opened the lips and I ate the book. And it was sweet in my mouth as honey." To eat the book is a strange and striking image, the whole formula of perfectibility, which, above, is knowledge, and, below, teaching.

We have just said, "Literature is the secretion of civilization." Do you doubt it? Open the first statistics you come across.

Here is one which we find under our hand: *Bagne de Toulon*, 1862. Three thousand and ten prisoners. Of these three thousand and ten convicts, forty know a little more than to read and write, two hundred and eighty-seven know how to read and write, nine hundred and four read badly and write badly, seventeen hundred and seventy-nine know neither how to read nor write. In this wretched crowd, all the merely mechanical trades are represented by numbers decreasing according as they rise towards the enlightened pursuits, and you arrive at this final result: goldsmiths and jewellers, four;

ecclesiastics, three; lawyers, two; comedians, one; artist musicians, one; men of letters, not one.

The transformation of the crowd into the people; profound labour. It is to this labour that the men called socialists have devoted themselves during the last forty years. The author of this book, however insignificant he may be, is one of the oldest in this labour; *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné* dates from 1828, and *Claude Gueux* from 1834. He claims his place among these philosophers because it is a place of persecution. A certain hatred of socialism, very blind, but very general, has been at work for fifteen or sixteen years, and is still at work most bitterly among the influential classes (classes then are still in existence?) Let it not be forgotten, socialism, true socialism, has for its end the elevation of the masses to the civic dignity, and therefore for its principal care, moral and intellectual cultivation. The first hunger is ignorance; socialism wishes then, above all, to instruct. That does not hinder socialism from being calumniated, and socialists from being denounced. To most of the infuriated, trembling cowards who have their say at the present moment, these reformers are public enemies. They are guilty of everything that has gone wrong. "O Romans!" said Tertullian, "we are just, kind, thinking, lettered, honest men. We meet to pray, and we love you because you are our brethren. We are gentle and peaceable like little children, and we wish for concord among men. Nevertheless, O Romans! if the Tiber overflows, or if the Nile does not, you cry, 'To the lions with the Christians!'"

CHAPTER III.

The Democratic idea, the new bridge of civilization, undergoes at this moment the formidable trial of overweight. Every other idea would certainly give way under the load that it is made to bear. Democracy proves its solidity by the absurdities that are heaped on, without shaking it. It must resist everything that people choose to place on it. At this moment they try to make it carry despotism.

The people have no need of liberty; such was the password of a certain innocent and duped school, the head of which has been dead some years. That poor honest dreamer believed in good faith that men can keep progress with them when they turn out liberty. We have heard him put forth, probably without meaning it, this aphorism: Liberty is good for the rich. These kinds of maxims have the disadvantage of not being prejudicial to the establishment of empires.

No, no, no—nothing out of liberty.

Servitude is the blind soul. Can you figure to yourself a man blind voluntarily? This terrible thing exists. There are willing slaves. A smile in irons! Can anything be more hideous? He who is not free is not a man; he who is not free has no sight, no knowledge, no discernment, no growth, no comprehension, no will, no faith, no love; he has no wife, he has no children, he has a female and young ones, he lives not. *Ab luce principium.* Liberty is the apple of the eye. Liberty is the visual organ of progress.

Because liberty has inconveniences, and even perils,

to wish to create civilization without it is just the same as to try cultivation without the sun; the sun is also a censurable heavenly body. One day, in the too beautiful summer of 1829, a critic, now forgotten, and wrongly—for he was not without some talent—M. P., being too hot, mended his pen, saying—"I am going to give well to the sun."

Certain social theories, very distinct from socialism such as we understand and want it, have gone astray. Let us discard all that resembles the convent, the barrack, the cellular and straight line systems. Paraguay, minus the Jesuits, is Paraguay just the same. To give a new fashion to evil is not a useful task. To recommence the old slavery is idiotic. Let the nations of Europe beware of a despotism made anew from materials they have to some extent themselves supplied. Such a thing, cemented with a special philosophy, might well last. We have just mentioned the theorists, some of whom otherwise right and sincere, who, by dint of fearing the dispersion of activities and energies, and of what they call "anarchy," have arrived at an almost Chinese acceptation of absolute social concentration. They turn their resignation into a doctrine. Provided man eats and drinks, all is right. The happiness of the beast is the solution. But this is a happiness which some other men would call by a different name.

We dream for nations something else besides a felicity solely made up of obedience. The bastinado turns up that sort of felicity for the Turkish fellah, the knout for the Russian serf, and the cat-o'-nine-tails for the English soldier. These socialists by the side of socialism come from Joseph de Maistre, and from Ancillon, without suspecting it perhaps; for the ingenuousness of these theorists rallied to the *fait accompli* has—or fancies it has—democratic intentions, and speaks energetically of the "principles of '89." Let these involuntary philosophers of a possible

despotism think of it; to teach the masses a doctrine against liberty; to cram intellects with appetites and fatalism—a certain situation being given—to saturate it with materialism, and to run the risk of the construction which might proceed from it, would be to understand progress in the fashion of that worthy man who applauded a new gibbet, and who exclaimed —"This is all right! We have had till now but the old wooden gallows—to-day the age advances; and here we are with a good stone gibbet, which will do for our children and grandchildren!"

CHAPTER IV.

To enjoy a full stomach, a satisfied intestine, a satiated belly, is doubtless something, for it is the enjoyment of the brute. However, one may place one's ambition higher.

Certainly, a good salary is a fine thing. To tread on this firm ground, high wages, is pleasant. The wise man likes to want nothing. To insure his own position is the characteristic of an intelligent man. An official chair, with ten thousand sesterces a year, is a graceful and convenient seat. Great emoluments give a fresh complexion and good health. One lives to an old age in pleasant, well-paid sinecures. The high financial world, rich in plentiful profits, is a place agreeable to live in. To be well at court settles a family well and brings a fortune; as for myself, I prefer to all these solid comforts the old leaky vessel in which Bishop Quodvultdeus embarks with a smile.

There is something beyond gorging oneself. The goal of man is not the goal of the animal.

A moral enhancement is necessary. The life of nations, like the life of individuals, has its minutes of depression; these minutes pass, certainly, but no trace of them ought to remain. Man, at this hour, tends to fall into the stomach: man must be replaced in the heart, man must be replaced in the brain. The brain, behold the sovereign that must be restored! The social question requires to-day, more than ever, to be examined on the side of human dignity.

To show man the human end, to ameliorate intelligence first, the animal afterwards, to disdain the flesh as long as the thought is despised, and to give the example on their own flesh, such is the actual, immediate, urgent duty of writers.

It is what men of genius have done at all times.

You ask in what poets can be useful? In imbuing civilization with light—only that.

CHAPTER V.

Up to this day there has been a literature of *literati*. In France, particularly, as we have said, literature had a disposition to form a caste. To be a poet was something like being a mandarin. Words did not all belong by right to the language. The dictionary granted or did not grant the registration. The dictionary had a will of its own. Imagine the botanist declaring to a vegetable that it does not exist, and nature timidly offering an insect to entomology which refuses it as incorrect. Imagine astronomy cavilling at the stars. We recollect having heard an Academician, now dead, say in full academy that French had been spoken in France only in the seventeenth century, and that for twelve years; we know not which. Let us give up, for it is time, this order of ideas; democracy requires it. The actual enlarging of thoughts needs something else. Let us leave the college, the conclave, the cell, the weak taste, weak art, the small chapel. Poetry is not a coterie. There is at this hour an effort made to galvanize dead things. Let us strive against this tendency. Let us insist on the truths which are urgent. The *chefs-d'œuvre* recommended by the manual of bachelorship, compliments in verse and in prose, tragedies soaring over the head of some king, inspiration in full official dress, the brilliant nonentities fixing laws on poetry, the *Arts poétiques* which forget La Fontaine, and for which Molière is doubtful, the Planats castrating the Corneilles, prudish tongues, the thoughts enclosed between four walls, and limited by

Quintilian, Longinus, Boileau, and La Harpe; all that, although official and public teaching is filled and saturated with it, all that belongs to the past. Some particular epoch, which is called the grand century, and for a certainty the fine century, is nothing else in reality but a literary monologue. Is it possible to realize such a strange thing, a literature which is an aside? It seems as if one read on the frontal of art "No admittance." As for ourselves, we understand poetry only with the door wide open. The hour has struck for hoisting the "All for All." What is needed by civilization, henceforth a grown-up woman, is a popular literature.

1830 has opened a debate, literary on the surface, at the bottom social and human. The moment is come to close the debate. We close it by asking a literature having in view this purpose, "The People."

The author of these pages wrote, thirty-one years ago, in the preface to *Lucrèce Borgia*, a few words often repeated since: "*Le poëte a charge d'âmes.*" He would add here, if it were worth saying, that, allowing for possible error, the words, uttered by his conscience, have been his rule throughout life.

CHAPTER VI.

MACCHIAVELLI was casting on the people a strange look. To heap the measure, to overflow the cup, to exaggerate horror in the case of the prince, to increase the crushing in order to stir up the oppressed to revolt, to cause idolatry to change into a curse, to push the masses to extremities, such seems to be his policy. His yes signifies no. He loads the despot with despotism in order to make him burst. The tyrant becomes in his hands a hideous projectile, which will break to pieces. Macchiavelli conspires. For whom? Against whom? Guess. His apotheosis of kings is just the thing to make regicides. On the head of his Prince he places a diadem of crimes, a tiara of vices, a halo of baseness, and he hastily invites you to adore his monster, with the air of a man expecting an avenger. He glorifies evil with a squint towards the darkness. It is in the darkness that is Harmodius. Macchiavelli, the getter up of princely outrages, the valet of the Medici and of the Borgias, had in his youth been put to the rack for having admired Brutus and Cassius. He had perhaps plotted with the Soderini the deliverance of Florence. Does he recollect it? Does he continue? His advice is followed, like the lightning, by a low rumbling in the cloud, alarming prolongation. What did he mean to say? On whom has he a design? Is the advice for or against him to whom he gives it? One day, at Florence, in the garden of Cosmo Ruccelaï, there being present the Duke of Mantua and John de Medici, who afterwards commanded the Black

Bands of Tuscany, Varchi, the enemy of Macchiavelli, heard him say to the two princes, "Let the people read no book, not even mine." It is curious to compare with this remark the advice given by Voltaire to the Duke de Choiseul, at the same time advice to the minister, and insinuation for the king: "Let the boobies read our nonsense. There is no danger in reading, my lord. What can a great king like the king of France fear? The people are but rabble, and the books are but trash." Let them read nothing, let them read everything: these two pieces of contrary advice coincide more than one would think. Voltaire, with hidden claws, is purring at the feet of the king. Voltaire and Macchiavelli are two formidable indirect revolutionists, dissimilar in everything, and yet identical in reality by their profound hatred, disguised in flattery, of the master. The one is malignant, the other is sinister. The princes of the sixteenth century had as theorist on their infamies, and as enigmatical courtier, Macchiavelli, an enthusiast dark at heart. The flattery of a sphinx, terrible thing! Better yet be flattered, like Louis XV., by a cat.

Conclusion: Make the people read Macchiavelli, and make them read Voltaire.

Macchiavelli will inspire them with horror of, and Voltaire with contempt for, crowned guilt.

But the hearts should turn above all towards the grand pure poets, whether they be sweet like Virgil or bitter like Juvenal.

CHAPTER VII.

THE progress of man by the education of minds; there is no safety but in that. Teach! learn! All the revolutions of the future are enclosed, sunk in this phrase: Gratuitous and Obligatory Instruction.

It is by the unfolding of works of the highest order that this vast intellectual teaching should be crowned. At the top the men of genius.

Wherever there is a gathering of men, there ought to be, in a special place, a public expositor of the great thinkers.

By a great thinker we mean a beneficent thinker.

The perpetual presence of the beautiful in their works maintains poets at the summit of teaching.

No one can foresee the quantity of light which will be brought forth by letting the people be in communication with men of genius. This combination of the hearts of the people with the heart of the poet will be the Voltaic pile of Civilization.

Will the people understand this magnificent teaching? Certainly. We know of nothing too lofty for the people. The people are a great soul. Have you ever gone on a fête-day to a theatre open gratuitously to all? What do you think of that auditory? Do you know of any other more spontaneous and intelligent? Do you know, even in the forest, of a vibration more profound? The court of Versailles admires like a well-drilled regiment; the people throw themselves passionately into the beautiful. They pack together, crowd, amalgamate, combine, and knead themselves

in the theatre; a living paste that the poet is about to mould. The powerful thumb of Molière will presently make its mark on it; the nail of Corneille will scratch this ill-shaped heap. Whence does that heap come? Whence does it proceed? From the Courtille, from the Porcherons, from the Cunette; it is shoeless, with tucked-up sleeves in rags. Silence! This is the human block.

The house is crowded, the vast multitude looks, listens, loves; all consciences, deeply moved, throw off their inner fire, all eyes glisten, the huge beast with a thousand heads is there, the *Mob* of Burke, the *Plebs* of Titus Livius, the *Fex urbis* of Cicero, it caresses the beautiful, it smiles at it with the grace of a woman, it is literary in the most refined sense of the word; nothing equals the delicacy of this monster. The tumultuous crowd trembles, blushes, palpitates; its modesty is surprising; the crowd is a virgin. No prudery however, this brute is not brutal. Not a sympathy escapes it; it has in itself the whole keyboard, from passion to irony, from sarcasm to sobbing. Its compassion is more than compassion; it is real mercy. God is felt in it. All at once the sublime passes, and the sombre electricity of the abyss heaves up suddenly all this pile of hearts and entrails, the transfiguration of enthusiasm operates, and now, is the enemy at the gates, is the country in danger? Throw a cry to that populace, it would enact the sublime drama of Thermopylæ. Who has called forth such a metamorphosis? Poetry.

The multitude, and in this lies their grandeur, are profoundly open to the ideal. When they come in contact with lofty art they are pleased, they shudder. Not a detail escapes them. The crowd is one liquid and living expanse capable of vibration. A mass is a sensitive plant. Contact with the beautiful agitates ecstatically the surface of multitudes, sure sign that the depth is sounded. A rustling of leaves, a myste-

rious breath passes, the crowd trembles under the sacred insufflation of the abyss.

And there, even where the man of the people is not in a crowd, he is yet a good hearer of great things. His ingenuousness is honest, his curiosity healthy. Ignorance is a longing. His near connexion with nature renders him subject to the holy emotion of the true. He has, towards poetry, secret natural desires which he does not suspect himself. All the teachings are due to the people. The more divine the light, the more is it made for this simple soul. We would have in the villages a pulpit from which Homer should be explained to the peasants.

CHAPTER VIII.

Too much matter is the evil of our day. Hence a certain dulness.

It is necessary to restore some ideal in the human mind. Whence shall you take your ideal? Where is it? The poets, the philosophers, the thinkers are the urns. The ideal is in Æschylus, in Isaiah, in Juvenal, in Alighieri, in Shakespeare. Throw Æschylus, throw Isaiah, throw Juvenal, throw Dante, throw Shakespeare into the deep soul of the human race.

Throw Job, Solomon, Pindar, Ezekiel, Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, Theocritus, Plautus, Lucretius, Virgil, Terence, Horace, Catullus, Tacitus, St. Paul, St. Augustin, Tertullian, Petrarch, Pascal, Milton, Descartes, Corneille, La Fontaine, Montesquieu, Diderot, Rousseau, Beaumarchais, Sedaine, André Chénier, Kant, Byron, Schiller—throw all these souls into the man.

All the wits from Æsop up to Molière, all the intellects from Plato up to Newton, all the encyclopedists from Aristotle up to Voltaire.

By that means, whilst curing the illness for the moment, you will establish for ever the health of the human mind.

You will cure the middle class and found the people.

As we have said just now, after the destruction which has delivered the world, you will construct the edifice which shall make it prosper.

What an aim! to make the people! Principles

combined with science, every possible quantity of the absolute introduced by degrees into the fact, Utopia treated successively by every mode of realization, by political economy, by philosophy, by physics, by chemistry, by dynamics, by logic, by art; union replacing little by little antagonism, and unity replacing union, for religion God, for priest the father, for prayer virtue, for field the whole earth, for language the verb, for law the right, for motive-power duty, for hygiene labour, for economy universal peace, for canvas the very life, for the goal progress, for authority liberty, for people the man. Such is the simplification.

And at the summit the ideal.

The ideal! immovable type of progress going onward.

To whom belong men of genius, if not to thee, people? They do belong to thee; they are thy sons and thy fathers. Thou givest birth to them, and they teach thee. They open in thy chaos vistas of light. Children, they have drunk thy sap. They have leaped in the universal matrix, humanity. Each of thy phases, people, is an avatar. The deep essence of life, it is in thee that it must be looked for. Thou art the great bosom. Geniuses are begotten from thee, mysterious crowd.

Let them therefore return to thee.

People, the author, God, dedicates them to thee.

BOOK VI.

THE BEAUTIFUL THE SERVANT OF THE TRUE.

CHAPTER I.

Ah, minds! be useful! Be of some service. Do not be fastidious when it is necessary to be efficient and good. Art for art may be beautiful, but art for progress is more beautiful yet. To dream reverie is well, to dream Utopia is better. Ah! you must think? Then think of making man better. You must dream? Here is the dream for you: the ideal. The prophet seeks solitude, but not isolation. He unravels and untwists the threads of humanity tied and rolled in a skein in his soul; he does not break them. He goes into the desert to think; of whom? Of the multitude. It is not to the forests that he speaks, it is to the cities. It is not at the grass bending to the wind that he looks, it is at man; it is not against lions that he wars, it is against tyrants. Woe to thee, Ahab! woe to thee, Hosea! woe to you, kings! woe to you, Pharaohs! is the cry of the great solitary one. Then he weeps.

For what? for that eternal captivity of Babylon, undergone by Israel formerly, undergone by Poland, by Roumania, by Hungary, by Venice to-day. He grows old, the good and dark thinker; he watches, he lies in wait, he listens, he looks, ear in the silence, eye

in the night, claw half stretched towards the wicked. Go and speak to him then of art for art, to that cenobite of the ideal. He has his aim, and he walks straight towards it, and his aim is this: Improvement. He devotes himself to it.

He does not belong to himself, he belongs to his apostolate. He is entrusted with that immense care, the progress of the human race. Genius is not made for genius, it is made for man. Genius on earth is God giving himself. Each time that a *chef-d'œuvre* appears, it is a distribution of God that takes place. The *chef-d'œuvre* is a variety of the miracle. Thence, in all religions, and among all peoples, faith in divine men. They deceive themselves, those who think that we deny the divinity of Christs.

At the point now reached by the social question, everything should be action in common. Forces isolated frustrate one another, the ideal and the real strengthen each other. Art necessarily aids science. These two wheels of progress should turn together.

Generation of new talents, noble group of writers and poets, legion of young men, O living posterity of my country! Your elders love and salute you. Courage! let us devote ourselves. Let us devote ourselves to the good, to the true, to the just. In that there is goodness.

Some pure lovers of art, affected by a pre-occupation which in its way has its dignity and nobleness, discard this formula, "Art for Progress," the Beautiful Useful, fearing lest the useful should deform the beautiful. They tremble lest they should see attached to the fine arms of the Muse the coarse hand of the drudge. According to them the ideal may become perverted by too much contact with reality. They are anxious for the sublime if it is lowered as far as humanity. Ah! they are mistaken.

The useful, far from circumscribing the sublime, increases it. The application of the sublime to human things produces unexpected *chefs-d'œuvre.* The useful, considered in itself and as an element combining with the sublime, is of several kinds; there is the useful which is tender, and there is the useful which is indignant. Tender, it refreshes the unfortunate and creates the social epopee; indignant, it flagellates the wicked, and creates the divine satire. Moses hands the rod to Jesus, and after having caused the water to gush from the rock, that august rod, the very same, drives the vendors from the sanctuary.

What! art should grow less because it has expanded! No. One service more is one more beauty.

But people cry out: To undertake the cure of social evils, to amend the codes, to denounce the law to the right, to pronounce those hideous words, "bagne," galley-slave, convict, girl of the town; to control the police-registers, to contract the dispensaries, to sound the salary and the stoppage from work, to taste the black bread of the poor, to seek labour for the work-girl, to confront fashionable idleness with ragged sloth, to throw down the partition of ignorance, to open schools, to teach little children how to read, to attack shame, infamy, error, vice, crime, want of conscience; to preach the multiplication of spelling-books, to proclaim the equality of the sun, to ameliorate the food of intellects and of hearts, to give meat and drink, to claim solutions for problems and shoes for naked feet, that is not the business of the azure. Art is the azure.

Yes, art is the azure; but the azure from above, from which falls the ray which swells the corn, makes the maize yellow and the apple round, gilds the orange, sweetens the grape. I repeat it, one service more is one more beauty. At all events, where is the diminution? To ripen the beetroot, to water the potatoes, to thicken the lucern, the trefoil, and the hay; to be

a fellow-workman with the ploughman, the vine-dresser, and the gardener, that does not deprive the heavens of one star. Ah! immensity does not despise utility, and what does it lose by it? Does the vast vital fluid that we call magnetic or electric, lighten less splendidly the depth of the clouds, because it consents to perform the office of pilot to a bark, and to keep always turned to the north the small needle that is trusted to it, the huge guide? Is the aurora less magnificent, has it less purple and emerald, does it undergo any decrease of majesty, of grace, and radiancy, because, foreseeing the thirst of a fly, it carefully secretes in the flower the drop of dew which the bee requires?

Yet, people insist: To compose social poetry, human poetry, popular poetry, to grumble against the evil and for the good, to promote public passions, to insult despots, to make rascals despair, to emancipate man before he is of age, to push souls forward and darkness backward, to know that there are thieves and tyrants, to clean penal cells, to empty the pail of public filth; what! Polymnia, sleeves tucked up to do such dirty work! Oh! for shame!

Why not?

Homer was the geographer and the historian of his time, Moses the legislator of his, Juvenal the judge of his, Dante the theologian of his, Shakespeare the moralist of his, Voltaire the philosopher of his. No region, in speculation or in real fact, is shut to the mind. Here an horizon, there wings; right for all to soar.

For certain sublime beings, to soar is to serve. In the desert not a drop of water, a horrible thirst, the wretched file of pilgrims drag along overcome; all at once, in the horizon, above a wrinkle in the sands, a griffon is seen soaring, and all the caravan cry out, "There is water there!"

What thinks Æschylus of art as art? Certainly, if ever a poet was a poet, it is Æschylus. Listen to his

reply. It is in the "Frogs" of Aristophanes, line 1039. Æschylus speaks :—"Since the origin of times, the illustrious poet has served men. Orpheus has taught the horror of murder, Musæus oracles and medicine, Hesiod agriculture, and that divine Homer, heroism. And I, after Homer, I have sung Patroclus, and Teucer the lion-hearted; so that every citizen should try to resemble the great men."

In the same way that all the sea is salt, all the Bible is poetry. This poetry talks politics at its own hours. Open 1 Samuel, chapter viii. The Jewish people demand a king. ". . . . And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." . . . . "And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots." . . . . "And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, *even* the best *of them*, and give *them* to his servants. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day, because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day." Samuel, we see, denies the right divine; Deuteronomy shakes the altar, the false altar, let us observe; but is not the next altar always the false altar? "You shall demolish the altars of the false gods. You shall seek God where he dwells." It is almost Pantheism. Because it takes part in human things, is democratic

here, iconoclast there, is that book less magnificent and less supreme? If poetry is not in the Bible, where is it?

You say: The muse is made to sing, to love, to believe, to pray. Yes and no. Let us understand each other. To sing whom? The void. To love what? Oneself. To believe in what? The dogma. To pray to what? The idol. No, here is the truth: To sing the ideal, to love humanity, to believe in progress, to pray to the infinite.

Take care, you who are tracing those circles round the poet, you put him beyond man. That the poet should be beyond humanity in one way, by the wings, by the immense flight, by the sudden possible disappearance in the fathomless, it is well, it must be so, but on condition of reappearance. He may depart, but he must return. Let him have wings for the infinite, provided he has feet for the earth, and that, after having been seen flying, he is seen walking. Let him become man again, after he has gone out of humanity. After he has been seen an archangel, let him be once more a brother. Let the star which is in that eye weep a tear, and that tear be the human tear. Thus, human and superhuman, he shall be the poet. But to be altogether beyond man, is not to be. Show me thy foot, genius, and let us see if, like myself, thou hast earthly dust on thy heel.

If thou hast not some of that dust, if thou hast never walked in my pathway, thou dost not know me and I do not know thee. Go away. Thou believest thyself an angel, thou art but a bird.

Aid from the strong for the weak, help from the great for the small, help from the free for the slaves, help from the thinkers for the ignorant, help from the solitary for the multitudes. Such is the law, from Isaiah to Voltaire. He who does not follow that law may be a genius, but he is only a useless genius. By not handling the things of the earth, he thinks to

purify himself, he annuls himself. He is the refined, the delicate, he may be the exquisite genius; he is not the great genius. Any one, roughly useful, but useful, has the right to ask on seeing that good-for-nothing genius, Who is this idler? The amphora which refuses to go to the fountain deserves the hooting of the pitchers.

Great is he who devotes himself! Even when overcome, he remains serene, and his misery is happiness. No, it is not a bad thing for the poet to meet face to face with duty. Duty has a stern resemblance to the ideal. The act of doing one's duty is worth the trouble of being tried. No, the jostling with Cato is not to be avoided. No, no, no; truth, honesty, teaching the crowds, human liberty, manly virtue, conscience, are not things to disdain. Indignation and emotion are but one faculty turned towards the two sides of mournful human slavery, and those who are capable of anger are capable of love. To level the tyrant and the slave, what a magnificent effort! Now, the whole of one side of actual society is tyrant, and all the other side is slave. Wonderful straightening to accomplish. It will be done. All thinkers must work with that end in view. They will gain greatness in that work. To be the servant of God in the march of progress and the apostle of God with the people, such is the law which regulates the growth of genius.

CHAPTER II.

THERE are two poets, the poet of caprice and the poet of logic; and there is a third poet, a component of both, amending them one by the other, completing them one by the other, and summing them up in a loftier entity; the two statures in a single one. The third is the first. He has caprice, and he follows the wind. He has logic, and he follows duty. The first writes the Canticle of Canticles, the second writes Leviticus, the third writes the Psalms and the Prophecies. The first is Horace, the second is Lucan, the third is Juvenal. The first is Pindar, the second is Hesiod, the third is Homer.

No loss of beauty results from goodness. Is the lion less beautiful than the tiger, because it has the faculty of merciful emotion? Does that jaw which opens to let the infant fall into the hands of the mother deprive that mane of its majesty? Does the vast noise of the roaring vanish from that terrible mouth because it has licked Androcles? The genius which does not help, even if graceful, is deformed. A prodigy without love is a monster. Let us love! let us love!

To love has never hindered from pleasing. Where have you seen one form of the good excluding the other? On the contrary, all that is good is connected. Let us, however, understand each other. It does not follow that to have one quality implies necessarily the possession of the other; but it would be strange that one quality added to another should make less. To be useful, is but to be useful; to be beautiful is but

to be beautiful; to be useful and beautiful is to be sublime. That is what St. Paul is in the first century, Tacitus and Juvenal in the second, Dante in the thirteenth, Shakespeare in the sixteenth, Milton and Molière in the seventeenth.

We have just now recalled a saying become famous, "Art for art." Let us, once for all, explain ourselves in this question. If faith can be placed in an affirmation very general and very often repeated, we believe honestly, these words, "Art for art," would have been written by the author of this book himself. Written? never! You may read, from the first to the last line, all that we have published, you will not find these words. It is the opposite which is written throughout our works, and we insist on it, in our entire life. As for these words in themselves, how far are they real? Here is the fact, which several of our cotemporaries remember as well as we do. One day, thirty-five years ago, in a discussion between critics and poets on Voltaire's tragedies, the author of this book threw out this interruption, "This tragedy is not a tragedy. It is not men who live, it is sentences which speak in it! Rather a hundred times 'Art for Art!'" This remark turned, doubtless involuntarily, from its true sense to serve the wants of discussion, has since taken, to the great surprise of him who had uttered it, the proportions of a formula. It is this opinion, limited to "Alzire" and to the "Orpheline de la Chine," and incontestable in that restricted application, which has been turned into a perfect declaration of principles, and an axiom to inscribe on the banner of art.

This point settled, let us go on.

Between two verses, the one by Pindar, deifying a coachman or glorifying the brass nails of the wheel of a chariot, the other by Archilochus, so powerful that, after having read it, Jeffreys would leave off his career of crimes and would hang himself on the

gallows prepared by him for honest people, between these two verses, of equal beauty, I prefer that of Archilochus.

In times anterior to history, when poetry is fabulous and legendary, it has a Promethean grandeur. What composes this grandeur? Utility. Orpheus tames wild animals; Amphion builds cities; the poet, tamer and architect, Linus aiding Hercules, Musæus assisting Dædalus, poetry a civilizing power, such is the origin. Tradition agrees with reason. The common sense of peoples is not deceived in that. It always invents fables in the sense of truth. Everything is great in those magnifying distances. Well, then, the wild-beast taming poet, that you admire in Orpheus, recognise him in Juvenal.

We insist on Juvenal. Few poets have been more insulted, more contested, more calumniated. Calumny against Juvenal has been drawn at such long date that it lasts yet. It passes from one literary clown to another. These grand haters of evil are hated by all the flatterers of power and success. The mob of fawning sophists, of writers who have around the neck the mark of their slavery, of bullying historiographers, of scholiasts kept and fed, of court and school followers, stand in the way of the glory of the punishers and avengers. They croak around those eagles. People do not willingly render justice to the dispensers of justice. They hinder the masters and rouse the indignation of the lacqueys. There is such a thing as the indignation of baseness.

Moreover, the diminutives cannot do less than help each other, and Cæsarion must at least have Tyrannion as a support. The pedant snaps the ferules for the benefit of the satrap. There is for this kind of work a literary sycophancy and an official pedagogism. These poor, dear-paying vices, these excellent indulgent crimes, his Highness Rufinus, his Majesty Claudius, that august Madame Messalina who gives

such beautiful *fêtes*, and pensions out of her privy purse, and who lasts and who is perpetuated, always crowned, calling herself Theodora, then Fredegonde, then Agnes, then Margaret of Burgundy, then Isabel of Bavaria, then Catherine de Medici, then Catherine of Russia, then Caroline of Naples, &c. &c., all these great lords, crimes, all these fine ladies, turpitudes, shall they have the sorrow of witnessing the triumph of Juvenal? No. War with the scourge in the name of sceptres! War with the rod in the name of the shop! That is well! Go on, courtiers, clients, eunuchs, and scribes. Go on, publicans and pharisees. You will not hinder the republic from thanking Juvenal, or the temple from approving Jesus.

Isaiah, Juvenal, Dante, they are virgins. Observe their eyes cast down. There is chastity in the anger of the just against the unjust. The Imprecation can be as holy as the Hosanna, and indignation, honest indignation, has the very purity of virtue. In point of whiteness, the foam has no reason to envy the snow.

CHAPTER III.

History proves the working partnership of art and progress. *Dictus ob hoc lenire tigres.* Rhythm is a power. Power that the Middle Ages recognise and submit to not less than antiquity. The second barbarism, feudal barbarism, dreads also this power, poetry. The barons, not over-timid, are abashed before the poet; who is this man? They fear lest a manly song be sung. The spirit of civilization is with this unknown. The old donjons full of carnage open their wild eyes, and suspect the darkness; anxiety seizes hold of them. Feudality trembles, the den is disturbed. The dragons and the hydras are ill at ease. Why? because an invisible god is there.

It is curious to find this power of poetry in countries where unsociableness is deepest, particularly in England, in that extreme feudal darkness, *penitùs toto divisos orbe Britannos.* If we believe the legend, a form of history as true and as false as any other, it is thanks to poetry that Colgrim, besieged by the Britons, is relieved in York by his brother Bardulph the Saxon; that King Awlof penetrates into the camp of Athelstan; that Werburgh, prince of Northumbria, is delivered by the Welsh, whence, it is said, that Celtic device of the Prince of Wales, *Ich dien;* that Alfred, king of England, triumphs over Gitro, king of the Danes, and that Richard the lion-hearted escapes from the prison of Losenstein. Ranulph, Earl of Chester, attacked in his castle of Rothelan, is saved by the intervention of the minstrels, which was still authenti-

cated under Elizabeth by the privilege accorded to the minstrels patronized by the Lords of Dalton.

The poet had the right of reprimand and menace. In 1316, on Pentecost day, Edward II. being at table in the grand hall of Westminster with the peers of England, a female minstrel entered the hall on horseback, rode all round, saluted Edward II., predicted in a loud voice to the minion Spencer the gibbet and castration by the hand of the executioner, and to the king the hoof by means of which a red-hot iron should be buried in his intestines, placed on the table before the king a letter, and departed; and no one said anything to her.

At the festivals, the minstrels passed before the priests, and were more honourably treated. At Abingdon, at a festival of the Holy Cross, each of the twelve priests received fourpence, and each of the twelve minstrels two shillings. At the priory of Maxtoke, the custom was to give supper to the minstrels in the Painted Chamber, lighted by eight huge wax-candles.

The more we advance North, it seems as if the increased thickness of the fog increases the greatness of the poet. In Scotland he is enormous. If anything surpasses the legend of the Rhapsodists, it is the legend of the Scalds. At the approach of Edward of England, the bards defend Stirling as the three hundred had defended Sparta, and they have their Thermopylæ, as great as those of Leonidas. Ossian, perfectly certain and real, has had a plagiary; that is nothing; but this plagiarist has done more than rob him; he has made him insipid. To know Fingal only by Macpherson is as if one knew Amadis only by Tressan. They show at Staffa the stone of the poet, *Clachan an Bairdh*, so named, according to many antiquaries, long before the visit of Walter Scott to the Hebrides. This chair of the Bard, a great hollow rock ready for a giant wishing to sit down, is at the en-

trance of the grotto. Around it are the waves and the clouds. Behind the Clachan an Bairdh is heaped up and raised the superhuman geometry of basaltic prisms, the pell-mell of colonnades and waves, and all the mystery of the fearful edifice. The gallery of Fingal runs next to the poet's chair; the sea beats on it before entering under that terrible ceiling. When evening comes one imagines that he sees in that chair a form leaning on its elbow;—it is the ghost, say the fishermen of Mackinnon's clan; and no one would dare, even in full day, to go up as far as that formidable seat; for to the idea of the stone is allied the idea of the sepulchre, and on the chair of granite no one can be seated but the man of shade.

CHAPTER IV.

THOUGHT is power.

All power is duty. Should this power enter into repose in our age? Should duty shut its eyes? and is the moment come for art to disarm? Less than ever. The human caravan is, thanks to 1789, arrived on a high plateau, and the horizon being more vast, art has more to do. This is all. To every widening of horizon corresponds an enlargement of conscience.

We have not reached the goal. Concord condensed in happiness, civilization summed up in harmony, that is far off yet. In the eighteenth century, that dream was so distant that it seemed a guilty thought. The Abbé de St. Pierre was expelled from the Academy for having made that dream. An expulsion which strikes as rather severe at a period when pastorals carried the day even with Fontenelle and when St. Lambert invented the idyll for the use of the nobility. The Abbé de St. Pierre has left behind him a word and a dream; the word is his own—"*Bienfaisance;*" the dream belongs to all of us—"Fraternity." This dream, which made Cardinal de Polignac foam and Voltaire smile, is not now so much lost as it was once in the mist of the improbable; it is a little nearer; but we do not touch it. The people, those orphans who seek their mother, do not yet hold in their hand the hem of the robe of peace.

There remains around us a sufficient quantity of slavery, of sophistry, of war and death, to prevent the spirit of civilization from giving up any of its forces. The idea of the right divine is not yet entirely done

away with. That which has been Ferdinand VII. in Spain, Ferdinand II. in Naples, George IV. in England, Nicholas in Russia, still floats about. A remnant of the spectres is soaring. Inspirations descend from that fatal cloud on some crown-bearers who, leaning on their elbows, meditate with a sinister aspect.

Civilization has not done yet with those who grant constitutions, with the owners of peoples, and with the legitimate and hereditary madmen who assert themselves majesties by the grace of God, and think that they have the right of manumission over the human race. It is necessary to raise some obstacle, to show bad will to the past, and to bring to bear on these men, on these dogmas, on these chimeras which stand in the way, some hindrance. Intellect, thought, science, true art, philosophy, ought to watch and beware of misunderstandings. False rights contrive very easily to put in movement true armies. There are murdered Polands looming in the future. "All my anxiety," said a contemporary poet recently dead, "is the smoke of my cigar." My anxiety is also a smoke, the smoke of the cities which are burning in the distance. Therefore, let us bring the masters to grief, if we can.

Let us go again in the loudest possible voice over the lesson of the just and the unjust, of right and usurpation, of oath and perjury, of good and evil, of *fas et nefas;* let us come forth with all our old antitheses, as they say. Let us contrast what ought to be with what actually is. Let us put clearness into everything. Bring light, you that have it. Let us oppose dogma to dogma, principle to principle, energy to obstinacy, truth to imposture, dream to dream, the dream of the future to the dream of the past, liberty to despotism. People will be able to sit down, to stretch themselves at full length, and to go on smoking the cigar of fancy poetry, and to enjoy Boccaccio's "Decameron" with the sweet blue sky over their heads,

whenever the sovereignty of a king shall be exactly of the same dimension as the liberty of a man. Until then, little sleep. I am distrustful.

Put sentinels everywhere. Do not expect from despots a large share of liberty. Break your own shackles, all of you Polands that may be! Make sure of the future by your own exertions. Do not hope that your chain will forge itself into the key of freedom. Up, children of the fatherland! O mowers of the steppes, arise. Trust to the good intentions of orthodox czars just enough to take up arms. Hypocrisies and apologies, being traps, are one more danger.

We live in a time when orations are heard praising the magnanimity of white bears and the tender feelings of panthers. Amnesty, clemency, grandeur of soul, an era of felicity opens, fatherly love is the order of the day, see all that is already done; it must not be thought that the march of the age is not understood, august arms are open, rally still closer round the emperor; Muscovy is kind-hearted. See how happy the serfs are; the streams are to be of milk, prosperity, liberty for all, your princes groan like you over the past, they are excellent; come, fear nothing, dear ones! as far as we are concerned, we confess it. All very good, but candidly, we are of those who put no reliance in the lachrymal gland of crocodiles.

The actual public monstrosities impose stern obligations on the conscience of the thinker, philosopher, or poet. Incorruptibility must resist corruption. It is more than ever necessary to show men the ideal, that mirror in which is seen the face of God.

CHAPTER V.

THERE are in literature and philosophy men who have tears and laughter at command, Heraclituses wearing the mask of a Democritus, men often very great, like Voltaire. They are irony keeping a serious, sometimes tragic countenance.

These men, under the pressure of the influences and prejudices of their time, speak with a double meaning. One of the most profound is Bayle, the man of Rotterdam, the powerful thinker. (Do not write *Beyle*). When Bayle coolly utters this maxim, "It is better worth our while to weaken the grace of a thought than to anger a tyrant," I smile, I know the man; I think of the persecuted, almost proscribed one, and I know well that he has given way to the temptation of affirming merely to give me the longing to contest. But when it is a poet who speaks, a poet wholly free, rich, happy, prosperous almost to inviolability, one expects a clear, open, and healthy teaching, one cannot believe that from such a man can emanate anything like a desertion of his own conscience; and it is with a blush that one reads this: "Here below, in time of peace, let every man sweep his own street-door. In war, if conquered, let every man fraternize with the soldiery." . . . . . "Let every enthusiast be put on the cross when he reaches his thirtieth year. If he has once experienced the world as it is, from the dupe he becomes the rogue." . . . . . "What utility, what result, what advantage does the holy liberty of the press offer you? The complete demonstration of it is this; a profound contempt of public opinion." . . . . . "There

are people who have a mania for railing at everything that is great; they are the men who have attacked the Holy Alliance; and yet nothing has been invented more august and more salutary for humanity." These things, which lower the man who has written them, are signed *Goethe*. Goethe, when he wrote them, was sixty years old. Indifference to good and evil excites the brain, one may get intoxicated with it, and that is what comes of it. The lesson is a sad one. Mournful sight. Here the helot is a mind.

A quotation may be a pillory. We nail on the public highway these lugubrious sentences; it is our duty. Goethe has written that. Let it be remembered, and let no one among the poets fall again into the same error.

To go into a passion for the good, for the true, for the just; to suffer with the sufferers; to feel in our inner soul all the blows struck by every executioner on human flesh; to be scourged with Christ and flogged with the negro; to be strengthened and to lament; to climb, a titan, that wild peak where Peter and Cæsar make their swords fraternize, *gladium cum gladio copulemus;* to heap up for that escalade the Ossa of the ideal on the Pelion of the real; to make a vast repartition of hope; to avail oneself of the ubiquity of the book in order to be everywhere at the same time with a comforting thought; to push pell-mell men, women, children, whites, blacks, peoples, hangmen, tyrants, victims, impostors, the ignorant, proletaries, serfs, slaves, masters, towards the future, precipice to some, deliverance to others; to go forth, to wake up, to hasten, to march, to run, to think, to wish, ah! indeed, that is well. It is worth while being a poet. Beware, you lose your temper. Of course I do; but I gain anger. Come and breathe into my wings, hurricane!

There has been, of late years, an instant when impassibility was recommended to poets as a condition

of Olympus. To be indifferent, that was called being Olympian. Where had they seen that? That is an Olympus very unlike the real one. Read Homer. The Olympians are passion, and nothing else. Boundless humanity, such is their divinity. They fight unceasingly. One has a bow, another a lance, another a sword, another a club, another thunder. There is one of them who compels the leopards to draw him along. Another, wisdom, has cut off the head of night twined with serpents, and has nailed it to his shield. Such is the calm of the Olympians. Their angers make the thunders to roll from one end to the other of the Iliad and of the Odyssey.

These angers, when they are just, are good. The poet who has them is the true Olympian. Juvenal, Dante, Agrippa d'Aubigné, and Milton had these angers. Molière also. From the soul of Alcestes flashes constantly the lightning of "vigorous hatreds." Jesus meant that hatred of evil when he said, "I am come to bring war."

I like Stesichorus indignant, preventing the alliance of Greece with Phalaris, and fighting the brazen bull with strokes of the lyre.

Louis XIV. found it good to have Racine sleeping in his chamber when he, the king, was ill, turning thus the poet into an assistant to his apothecary, wonderful patronage to letters; but he asked nothing more from the "beaux esprits," and the horizon of his alcove seemed to him sufficient for them. One day, Racine, somewhat urged by Madame de Maintenon, had the idea to leave the king's chamber and to visit the garrets of the people. Thence a memoir on the public distress. Louis XIV. cast at Racine a killing look. Poets fare ill when, being courtiers, they do what royal mistresses ask of them. Racine, on the suggestion of Madame de Maintenon, risks a remonstrance which causes him to be driven from court, and he dies of it; Voltaire, at the instigation of

Madame de Pompadour, tries a madrigal, an awkward one it appears, which causes him to be driven from France, and he does not die of it. Louis XV. on reading the madrigal (*et gardez tous deux vos conquêtes*) had exclaimed, "What a fool this Voltaire is!"

Some years ago, "a well-authorized pen," as they say in official and academic patois, wrote this: "The greatest service that poets can render us, is to be good for nothing. We do not ask of them anything else." Observe the extent and spread of this word, the poets, which includes Linus, Musæus, Orpheus, Homer, Job, Hesiod, Moses, Daniel, Amos, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Æsop, David, Solomon, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Pindar, Archilochus, Tyrtæus, Stesichorus, Menander, Plato, Asclepiades, Pythagoras, Anacreon, Theocritus, Lucretius, Plautus, Terence, Virgil, Horace, Catullus, Juvenal, Apuleius, Lucan, Persius, Tibullus, Seneca, Petrarch, Ossian, Saadi, Ferdousi, Dante, Cervantes, Calderon, Lope de Vega, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Camoëns, Marot, Ronsard, Régnier, Agrippa d'Aubigné, Malherbe, Segrais, Racan, Milton, Pierre Corneille, Molière, Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine, Fontenelle, Regnard, Lesage, Swift, Voltaire, Diderot, Beaumarchais, Sedaine, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, André Chénier, Klopstock, Lessing, Wieland, Schiller, Goethe, Hoffmann, Alfieri, Châteaubriand, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, Burns, Walter Scott, Balzac, Musset, Béranger, Pellico, Vigny, Dumas, George Sand, Lamartine, all declared by the oracle "good for nothing," and having uselessness for excellence. That sentence, a "success," it appears, has been very often repeated. We repeat it in our turn. When the conceit of an idiot reaches such proportions it deserves registering. The writer who has emitted that aphorism is, so they assure us, one of the high personages of the day. We have no objection. Dignities do not lessen the length of the ears.

Octavius Augustus, on the morning of the battle

of Actium, met an ass that the owner called "Triumphus." This Triumphus, endowed with the faculty of braying, appeared to him of good omen; Octavius Augustus won the battle, remembered Triumphus, had the ass carved in bronze and placed in the Capitol. That made an ass Capitoline, but an ass.

One can understand kings saying to the poet, "Be useless;" but one does not understand the people saying so to him. The poet is for the people. *Pro populo poeta*, wrote Agrippa d'Aubigné. "All things for all men," exclaimed St. Paul. What is a mind? A feeder of souls. The poet is at the same time a menace and a promise. The anxiety with which he inspires oppressors calms and consoles the oppressed. It is the glory of the poet to place a restless pillow on the purple bed of the tormentors. It is often, thanks to him, that the tyrant awakes, saying, "I have slept badly." Every slavery, every disheartening faintness, every sorrow, every misfortune, every distress, every hunger, and every thirst, have a claim on the poet; he has one creditor, the human race.

To be the great servant does not certainly make the poet derogate, because on certain occasions, and to do his duty, he has uttered the cry of a people; because he has, when necessary, the sob of humanity in his breast, every voice of mystery sings not the less in him. Speaking so loudly does not prevent him speaking low. He is not less the confidant, and sometimes the confessor of hearts. He is not less intimately connected with those who love, with those who think, with those who sigh, thrusting his head in the twilight between the heads of two lovers. The love poems of André Chénier border on the angry iambic without disorder and without trouble: "Thou, virtue, weep if I die." The poet is the only living being to whom it is granted to thunder and to whisper, because he has in himself, like nature, the

rumbling of the cloud and the rustling of the leaf. He comes for a double function, a function individual and a public function, and it is for that that he requires, so to speak, two souls.

Ennius said, "I have three of them. An Oscan soul, a Greek soul, and a Latin soul." It is true that he made allusion only to the place of his birth, to the place of his education, and to the place where he was a citizen; and besides, Ennius was but a rough cast of a poet, vast, but unformed.

No poet without that activity of soul which is the resultant of conscience. The ancient moral laws require to be stated, the new moral laws require to be revealed; these two series do not coincide without some effort. That effort is incumbent on the poet. He assumes constantly the function of the philosopher. He must defend, according to the side attacked, now the liberty of the human mind, now the liberty of the human heart; to love being no less holy than to think. There is nothing of "Art for art" in all that.

The poet arrives in the midst of those goers and comers that we call the living, in order to tame, like the ancient Orpheus, the bad instincts, the tigers that are in man, and, like the legendary Amphion, to remove all the stones, prejudices and superstitions, to put in movement the new blocks, to reconstruct the courses and the foundations, and to build up again the city, that is to say, society.

That this immense service, viz. to co-operate in the work of civilization, should involve loss of beauty for poetry and of dignity for the poet, is a proposition which one cannot enunciate without smiling. Useful art preserves and augments all its graces, all its charms, all its prestige. Indeed, because he has taken part with Prometheus, the man progress, crucified on the Caucasus by brutal force, and gnawed at whilst alive by hatred, Æschylus is not lowered; because he has loosened the ligatures of idolatry;

because he has freed human thought from the bands of religious thed over it. *arctis nodis relligionum*, Lucretius is not diminished; the branding of tyrants with the red-hot iron of prophecy does not lessen Isaiah; the defence of his country does not taint Tyrtaeus. The beautiful is not degraded by having served liberty and the amelioration of human multitudes. A people enfranchised is not a bad end to a sonnet. No patriotic or revolutionary usefulness mis poetry of nothing. Because the huge Grütli has smoothed under its cliffs that formidable oath of three peasants from which sprang free Switzerland, it is all the same in the falling night, a lofty mass of serene shade alive with herds, where are heard innumerable invisible bells tinkling gently under the clear twilight sky.

CONCLUSION.

BOOK I.

AFTER DEATH—SHAKESPEARE—ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

In 1784, Bonaparte, then fifteen years old, arrived at the Military School of Paris from Brienne, being one among four under the escort of a minim priest: he mounted one hundred and seventy-three steps, carrying his small trunk, and reached, below the roof, the barrack chamber he was to inhabit. This chamber had two beds and a small window opening on the great yard of the school. The wall was whitewashed, the young predecessors of Bonaparte had rather blackened it with charcoal, and the new-comer could read in this little cell these four inscriptions that we ourselves read thirty-five years ago:—"It takes rather long to win an epaulet. *De Montgivray.*—The finest day in life is that of a battle. *Vicomte de Tinténiac.*—Life is but a long falsehood. *Le Chevalier Adolphe Delmas.* All ends under six feet of earth. *Le Comte de la Villette.*" By substituting for "an epaulet" "an empire," a very slight change, the above four inscriptions were all the destiny of Bonaparte, and a kind of *Manè Thecel Pharès* written beforehand upon that wall. Desmazis Junior, who accompanied Bonaparte, being his chamber-comrade, and about to occupy

one of the two beds, saw him take a pencil—it is Desmazis who has related the fact—and draw beneath the inscriptions that he had just read a rough sketch of his house at Ajaccio, then, by the side of that house, without suspecting that he was thus bringing near the island of Corsica another mysterious island then hid in the deep future, he wrote the last of the four sentences, "All ends under six feet of earth."

Bonaparte was right. For the hero, for the soldier, for the man of the material fact, all ends under six feet of earth; for the man of the idea everything commences there.

Death is a power.

For him who has had no other action but that of the mind, the tomb is the elimination of the obstacle. To be dead, is to be all-powerful.

The man of war is formidable whilst alive; he stands erect, the earth is silent, *siluit;* he has extermination in his gesture, millions of haggard men rush to follow him, a fierce horde, sometimes a ruffianly one; it is no longer a human head, it is a conqueror, it is a captain, it is a king of kings, it is an emperor, it is a dazzling crown of laurels which passes, throwing out lightning flashes, and allowing to be seen in starlight beneath it a vague profile of Cæsar: all this vision is splendid and thunder-striking: but let only a gravel come in the liver, or an excoriation to the pylorus, six feet of ground, and all is said. This spectrum vanishes. This tumultuous life falls into a hole; the human race pursues its way, leaving behind this nihility. If this man hurricane has made some lucky rupture, like Alexander in India, Charlemagne in Scandinavia, and Bonaparte in ancient Europe, that is all that remains of him. But let some passer-by, who has in him the ideal, let a poor wretch like Homer throw out a word in the darkness, and die, that word burns up in the gloom and becomes a star.

This vanquished one, driven from one town to another, is called Dante Alighieri; take care. This exiled one is called Æschylus, this prisoner is called Ezekiel; beware. This one-handed man is winged, it is Michael Cervantes. Do you know whom you see wayfaring there before you? It is a sick man, Tyrtæus: it is a slave, Plautus; it is a labourer, Spinoza; it is a valet, Rousseau. Well, that degradation, that labour, that servitude, that infirmity, is power, the supreme power, mind.

On the dunghill, like Job, under the stick, like Epictetus, under contempt, like Molière, mind remains mind. It is it that shall say the last word. The Caliph Almanzor makes the people spit on Averroes at the door of the mosque of Cordova, the Duke of York spits in person on Milton, a Rohan, almost a prince, "*duc ne daigne, Rohan suis,*" attempts to cudgel Voltaire to death. Descartes is driven from France in the name of Aristotle, Tasso pays for a kiss given a princess twenty years spent in a cell, Louis XV. sends Diderot to Vincennes; these are mere incidents, must there not be some clouds? Those appearances that were taken for realities, those princes, those kings melt away; there remains only what should remain, the human mind on the one side, the divine minds on the other; the true work and the true workers; society to be perfected and made fruitful, science seeking the true, art creating the beautiful, the thirst of thought, torment and happiness of man, inferior life aspiring to superior life. Men have to deal with real questions: with progress in intelligence and by intelligence. Men call to their aid the poets, prophets, philosophers, the inspired, thinkers. It is seen that philosophy is a nourishment and poetry a want. There must be another bread besides bread. If you give up poets, you must give up civilization. There comes an hour when the human race is compelled to reckon with Shakespeare the actor and Isaiah the beggar.

They are the more present that they are no longer seen. Once dead, these beings live.

What life did they lead? What kind of men were they? What do we know of them? Sometimes but little, as of Shakespeare; often nothing, as of those of ancient days. Has Job existed? Is Homer one, or several? Méziriac made Æsop straight, and Planudes made him a hunchback. Is it true that the prophet Hosea, in order to show his love for his country, even when fallen into opprobrium and become infamous, espoused a prostitute, and called his children Mourning, Famine, Shame, Pestilence, and Misery? Is it true that Hesiod ought to be divided between Cumæ in Æolia, where he was born, and Ascra, in Bœotia, where he had been brought up? Velleius Paterculus makes him live one hundred and twenty years after Homer, of whom Quintilian makes him contemporary. Which of the two is right? What matters it? The poets are dead, their thought reigns. Having been, they are.

They do more work to-day among us than when they were alive. Others who have departed this life rest from their labours, dead men of genius work.

They work upon what? Upon minds. They make civilization.

All ends under six feet of earth. No, everything commences there. No, everything germinates there. No, everything flowers in it, and everything grows in it, and everything bursts forth from it, and everything proceeds from it! Good for you, men of the sword, are these maxims!

Lay yourselves down, disappear, lie in the grave, rot. So be it.

During life, gildings, caparisons, drums and trumpets, panoplies, banners to the wind, tumults, make up an illusion. The crowd gazes with admiration on these things. It imagines that it sees something grand. Who has the casque? Who has the

cuirass? Who has the sword-belt? Who is spurred, morioned, plumed, armed? Hurrah for that one! At death the difference becomes striking. Juvenal takes Hannibal in the hollow of his hand.

It is not the Cæsar, it is the thinker, who can say when he expires, "*Deus fio.*" So long as he remains a man his flesh interposes betwixt other men and him. The flesh is a cloud upon genius. Death, that immense light, comes and penetrates the man with its aurora. No more flesh, no more matter, no more shade. The unknown which was within him manifests itself and beams forth. In order that a mind may give all its light, it requires death. The dazzling of the human race commences when that which was a genius becomes a soul. A book within which there is something of the ghost is irresistible.

He who is living does not appear disinterested. People mistrust him. People dispute him because they jostle against him. To be alive, and to be a genius is too much. It goes and comes as you do, it walks on the earth, it has weight, it throws a shadow, it obstructs. It seems as if there was importunity in too great a presence. Men do not find that man sufficiently like themselves. As we have said already, they owe him a grudge. Who is this privileged one? This functionary cannot be dismissed. Persecution makes him greater, decapitation crowns him. Nothing can be done against him, nothing for him, nothing with him. He is responsible, but not to you. He has his instructions. What he executes may be discussed, not modified. It seems as though he had a commission to execute from some one who is not man. Such exception displeases. Hence more hissing than applause.

Dead, he no longer obstructs. The hiss, now useless, dies out. Living, he was a rival; dead, he is a benefactor. He becomes, according to the beautiful expression of Lebrun, *l'homme irréparable.* Lebrun

observes this of Montesquieu; Boileau observes the same of Molière. *Avant qu'un peu de terre, &c.* This handful of earth has equally aggrandized Voltaire. Voltaire, so great in the eighteenth century, is still greater in the nineteenth. The grave is a crucible. That earth, thrown on a man, sifts his name, and allows that name to pass forth only purified. Voltaire has lost his false glory and retained the true. To lose the false, is to gain. Voltaire is neither a lyric poet, nor a comic poet, nor a tragic poet; he is the indignant yet tender critic of the old world; he is the mild reformer of manners; he is the man who softens men. Voltaire, who has lost ground as a poet, has risen as an apostle. He has done what is good, rather than what is beautiful. The good being included in the beautiful, those who, like Dante and Shakespeare, have produced the beautiful, surpass Voltaire; but below the poet, the place of the philosopher is still very high, and Voltaire is the philosopher. Voltaire is common sense in a continual stream. Excepting in literature, he is a good judge in everything. Voltaire was, in spite of his insulters, almost adored during his lifetime; he is in our days admired, now that the true facts of the case are known. The eighteenth century saw his mind: we see his soul. Frederick II., who willingly railed at him, wrote to D'Alembert, "Voltaire buffoons. This century resembles the old courts. It has a fool, who is Arouet." This fool of the century was its sage.

Such are the effects of the tomb for great minds. That mysterious entrance into the unknown leaves light behind. Their disappearance is resplendent. Their death evolves authority.

CHAPTER II.

SHAKESPEARE is the great glory of England. England has in politics Cromwell, in philosophy Bacon, in science Newton: three lofty men of genius. But Cromwell is tinged with cruelty and Bacon with meanness; as to Newton, his edifice is now shaking on its base. Shakespeare is pure, which Cromwell and Bacon are not, and immovable, which Newton is not. Moreover, he is higher as a genius. Above Newton there is Copernicus and Galileo; above Bacon there is Descartes and Kant; above Cromwell there is Danton and Bonaparte; above Shakespeare there is no one. Shakespeare has equals, but not a superior. It is a singular honour for a land to have borne that man. One may say to that land, "*alma parens.*" The native town of Shakespeare is an elect place; an eternal light is on that cradle; Stratford-on-Avon has a certainty that Smyrna, Rhodes, Colophon, Salamis, Chio, Argos, and Athens, the seven towns which disputed the birthplace of Homer, have not.

Shakespeare is a human mind; he is also an English mind. He is very English, too English; he is English so far as to weaken the horror surrounding the horrible kings whom he places on the stage, when they are kings of England, so far as to depreciate Philip Augustus in comparison with John Lackland, so far as expressly to make a scapegoat, Falstaff, in order to load him with the princely misdeeds of the young Henry V., so far as to partake in a certain measure of the hypocrisies of a pretended national history. Lastly, he is English so far as to attempt

to attenuate Henry VIII.; it is true that the eye of Elizabeth is fixed upon him. But at the same time, let us insist upon this, for it is by it that he is great, yes, this English poet is a human genius. Art, like religion, has its *Ecce Homo*. Shakespeare is one of those of whom we may utter this grand saying: He is Man.

England is egotistical. Egotism is an island. That which perhaps is needed by this Albion immersed in her own business, and at times looked upon with little favour by other nations, is disinterested greatness; of this Shakespeare gives her some portion. He throws that purple on the shoulders of his country. He is cosmopolite and universal by his fame. On every side he overflows island and egotism. Deprive England of Shakespeare and see how much the luminous reverberation of that nation would immediately decrease. Shakespeare modifies the English visage and makes it beautiful. With him England is no longer so much like Carthage.

Strange meaning of the apparition of men of genius! There is no great poet born in Sparta, no great poet born in Carthage. This condemns those two cities. Dig, and you shall find this: Sparta is but the city of logic; Carthage is but the city of matter; to one as to the other love is wanting. Carthage immolates her children by the sword, and Sparta sacrifices her virgins by nudity; here innocence is killed, and there modesty. Carthage knows only her bales and her cases; Sparta blends herself wholly with the law; there is her true territory; it is for the laws that her men die at Thermopylæ. Carthage is hard. Sparta is cold. They are two republics based upon stone. Therefore no books. The eternal sower who is never mistaken has not opened for those ungrateful lands his hand full of men of genius. Such wheat is not to be confided to the rock.

Heroism, however, is not refused to them; they

will have, if necessary, either the martyr or the captain; Leonidas is possible for Sparta, Hannibal for Carthage; but neither Sparta nor Carthage is capable of Homer. Some indescribable tenderness in the sublime, which causes the poet to gush from the very entrails of a people, is wanting in them. That latent tenderness, that *flebile nescio quid*, England possesses. As a proof, Shakespeare. We may add also as a proof, Wilberforce.

England, mercantile like Carthage, legal like Sparta, is worth more than Sparta and Carthage. She is honoured by this august exception, a poet; to have given birth to Shakespeare, makes England great.

Shakespeare's place is among the most sublime in that *élite* of absolute men of genius which, from time to time, increased by some splendid fresh arrival, crowns civilization and illumines with its immense radiancy the human race. Shakespeare is legion. Alone, he forms the counterpoise to our grand French seventeenth century, and almost to the eighteenth.

When one arrives in England, the first thing that he looks for is the statue of Shakespeare. He finds the statue of Wellington.

Wellington is a general who gained a battle, having chance for his partner.

If you insist on seeing Shakespeare's statue you are taken to a place called Westminster, where there are kings, a crowd of kings; there is also a corner called "Poets' Corner." There, in the shade of four or five magnificent monuments where some royal nobodies shine in marble and bronze, is shown to you on a small pedestal a little figure, and under this little figure, this name, "WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE."

In addition to this, statues everywhere; if you wish for statues you may find as many as you can wish. Statue for Charles, statue for Edward, statue for William, statues for three or four Georges, of whom one was an idiot. Statue of the Duke of Richmond

at Hartley; statue of Napier at Portsmouth; statue of Father Mathew at Cork; statue of Herbert Ingram I don't know where. A man has well drilled the riflemen, a statue; a man has commanded a manœuvre of the Horse Guards, a statue. Another has been a supporter of the past, has squandered all the wealth of England in paying a coalition of kings against 1789, against democracy, against light, against the ascending movement of the human race, quick, a pedestal for that, a statue to Mr. Pitt. Another has knowingly fought against truth, in the hope that it might be vanquished, and has found out one fine morning that truth is hard-lived, that it is strong, that it might be intrusted with forming a cabinet, and has then passed abruptly over to its side, one more pedestal, a statue for Mr. Peel. Everywhere, in every street, in every square, at every step, gigantic notes of admiration in the shape of columns: a column to the Duke of York, which should, this one, take the form of points of interrogation: a column to Nelson, pointed at by the ghost of Caracciolo; a column to Wellington, already named: columns for everybody; it is sufficient to have played with a sword somewhere. At Guernsey, by the seaside, on a promontory, there is a high column, similar to a lighthouse, almost a tower. This one is struck by lightning. Æschylus would have contented himself with it. For whom is this? For General Doyle. Who is General Doyle? A general. What has this General done? He has constructed roads. At his own expense? No, at the expense of the inhabitants. A column. Nothing for Shakespeare, nothing for Milton, nothing for Newton; the name of Byron is obscure. That is where England is, an illustrious and powerful nation.

It avails little that this nation has for scout and guide that generous British press, which is more than free, which is sovereign, and which through innumerable excellent journals throws light upon every ques-

tion, that is where England is; and let not France laugh too loudly, with her statue of Négrier, nor Belgium, with her statue of Belliard, nor Prussia, with her statue of Blücher, nor Austria, with the statue that she probably has of Schwartzenberg, nor Russia, with the statue that she certainly has of Souwaroff. If it is not Schwartzenberg, it is Windischgrätz; it is not Souwaroff, it is Kutusoff.

Be Paskiewitch or Jellachich, statue; be Augereau or Bessières, statue; be an Arthur Wellesley, they will make you a colossus, and the ladies will dedicate you to yourself, quite naked, with this inscription—"Achilles." A young man, twenty years of age, does that heroic action of marrying a beautiful young girl; they prepare for him triumphal arches, they come to see him out of curiosity, the grand-cordon is sent to him as on the morrow of a battle, the public squares are brilliant with fireworks, people who might have grey beards put on perukes to come and speechify to him almost on their knees, they throw up in the air millions sterling in squibs and rockets to the applause of a multitude in tatters, who will have no bread to-morrow; starving Lancashire participates in the wedding; people are in ecstasies, they fire guns, they ring the bells, "Rule Britannia!" "God save!" What! this young man has the kindness to do this! What a glory for the nation! Universal admiration—a great people become frantic, a great city falls into a swoon, a balcony looking upon the passage of the young man is let for five hundred guineas, people heap themselves together, press upon each other, thrust each other beneath the wheels of his carriage, seven women are crushed to death in the enthusiasm, their little children are picked up dead under the trampling feet, a hundred persons, partially stifled, are carried to the hospital, the joy is inexpressible. Whilst this is going on in London, the cutting of the isthmus of Panama is replaced by a war, the cutting of the isthmus of

Suez depends on one Ismail Pacha; a company undertakes the sale of the water of Jordan at a guinea the bottle; walls are invented which resist every cannon ball, after which missiles are invented which destroy every wall; an Armstrong cannon shot costs fifty pounds; Byzantium contemplates Abdul-Azis, Rome goes to confession; the frogs, encouraged by the stork, demand a heron; Greece, after Otho, again wants a king; Mexico, after Iturbide, again wants an emperor; China wants two of them, the king of the Centre, a Tartar, and the king of Heaven (Tien Wang), a Chinese. . . . . O earth! throne of stupidity.

CHAPTER III.

The glory of Shakespeare reached England from abroad. There was almost a day and an hour when one might have assisted at the landing of his fame at Dover.

It required three hundred years for England to begin to hear those two words that the whole world cries in her ear: "William Shakespeare."

What is England? She is Elizabeth. There is no incarnation more complete. In admiring Elizabeth, England loves her own looking-glass. Proud and magnanimous with strange hypocrisies, great with pedantry, haughty with ability, prude with audacity, having favourites, but no masters, her own mistress, even in her bed, all-powerful queen, inaccessible woman, Elizabeth is a virgin as England is an island. Like England, she calls herself Empress of the sea, *Basilea maris.* A fearful depth, in which are let loose the angry passions which behead Essex and the tempests which destroy the Armada, defends this virgin and defends this island from every approach. The ocean is the guardian of this modesty. A certain celibacy, in fact, constitutes all the genius of England. Alliances, be it so; no marriage. The universe always kept at some distance. To live alone, to go alone, to reign alone, to be alone, such is Elizabeth, such is England.

On the whole, a remarkable queen and an admirable nation.

Shakespeare, on the contrary, is a sympathetic genius. Insularism is his ligature, not his strength. He would break it willingly. A little more and Shake-

speare would be European. He loves and praises France; he calls her "the soldier of God." Besides, in that prudish nation, he is the free poet.

England has two books: one which she has made, the other which has made her—Shakespeare and the Bible. These two books do not agree together. The Bible opposes Shakespeare.

Certainly, as a literary book, the Bible, a vast cup from the East, more overflowing in poetry even than Shakespeare, might fraternize with him; in a social and religious point of view, it abhors him. Shakespeare thinks, Shakespeare dreams, Shakespeare doubts. There is in him something of that Montaigne whom he loved. The "to be or not to be" comes from the *que sais-je?*

Moreover, Shakespeare invents. A great objection. Faith excommunicates imagination. In respect to fables, faith is a bad neighbour and fondles only its own. One recollects Solon's staff raised against Thespis. One recollects the torch of Omar brandished over Alexandria. The situation is always the same. Modern fanaticism has inherited that staff and that torch. That is true in Spain, and is not false in England. I have heard an Anglican bishop discuss the "Iliad" and condense everything in this remark, with which he meant to annihilate Homer: "It is not true." Now, Shakespeare is much more a "liar" than Homer.

Two or three years ago, the journals announced that a French writer was about to sell a novel for four hundred thousand francs. This made quite a noise in England. A Conformist paper exclaimed, "How can a falsehood be sold at such a price?"

Besides, two words, all-powerful in England, range themselves against Shakespeare, and constitute an obstacle against him: "Improper, shocking." Observe that, on a host of occasions, the Bible also is "improper" and Holy Writ is "shocking." The Bible,

even in French, and through the rough lips of Calvin, does not hesitate to say, "Tu as paillardé, Jerusalem." These crudities are part of poetry as well as of anger, and the prophets, those angry poets, do not abstain from them. Gross words are constantly on their lips. But England, where the Bible is continually read, does not seem to realize it. Nothing equals the power of voluntary deafness in fanatics. Would you have another example of their deafness? At this hour Roman orthodoxy has not yet admitted the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, although averred by the four Evangelists. Matthew may say, "*Ecce mater et fratres ejus stabant foris. . . . Et fratres ejus Jacobus et Joseph, et Simon et Judas. Et sorores ejus nonne omnes apud nos sunt?*" Mark may insist: "*Nonne hic est faber, filius Mariæ, frater Jacobi et Joseph et Judæ et Simonis? Nonne et sorores ejus hic nobiscum sunt?*" Luke may repeat: "*Venerunt autem ad illum mater et fratres ejus.*" John may again take up the question: "*Ipse et mater ejus et fratres ejus. . . . Neque enim fratres ejus credebant in eum. . . . Ut autem ascenderunt fratres ejus.*" Catholicism does not hear.

To make up for it, in the case of Shakespeare, "somewhat of a pagan, like all poets" (Rev. John Wheeler), puritanism has a delicate hearing. Intolerance and inconsequence are sisters. Besides, in the matter of proscribing and damning, logic is superfluous. When Shakespeare, by the mouth of Othello, calls Desdemona "whore," general indignation, unanimous revolt, scandal from top to bottom. Who then is this Shakespeare? All the biblical sects stop their ears, without thinking that Aaron addresses exactly the same epithet to Sephora, wife of Moses. It is true that that is in an Apocryphal work, "The Life of Moses." But the Apocryphal books are quite as authentic as the Canonical ones.

Thence in England, for Shakespeare, a depth of irreducible coldness. What Elizabeth was for Shakespeare,

England is still. At least we fear so. We should be happy to be contradicted. We are more ambitious for the glory of England than England is herself. This cannot displease her.

England has a strange institution, "the poet laureate," which attests the official admiration and a little the national admiration. Under Elizabeth, England's poet was named Drummond.

Of course, we are no longer in the days when they placarded "Macbeth, opera of Shakespeare, altered by Sir William Davenant." But if "Macbeth" is played, it is before a small audience. Kean and Macready have tried and failed in the endeavour.

At this hour, they would not play Shakespeare on any English stage without erasing from the text the word "God" wherever they find it. In the full tide of the nineteenth century, the Lord Chamberlain weighs still heavily on Shakespeare. In England, outside the church, the word God is not made use of. In conversation they replace "God" by "Goodness." In the editions or in the representations of Shakespeare, "God" is replaced by "Heaven." The sense suffers, the verse limps; no matter. "Lord! Lord! Lord!" the last appeal of Desdemona expiring, was suppressed by command in the edition of Blount and Jaggard in 1623. They do not utter it on the stage. "Sweet Jesus!" would be a blasphemy; a devout Spanish woman on the English stage is bound to exclaim "Sweet Jupiter!" Do we exaggerate? Would you have a proof? Let us open "Measure for Measure." There is a nun, Isabella. Whom does she invoke? Jupiter. Shakespeare had written "Jesus."*

* On the other hand, however, in spite of all the Lords-Chamberlains, it is difficult to beat the French censorship. Religions are diverse, but bigotry is one, and is the same in all its specimens. What we are about to write is an extract from the notes added to his translation by the new translator of Shakespeare.

"Jesus! Jesus!" This exclamation of Shallow was expunged in the edition of 1623, conformably to the statute which forbade the

The tone of a certain puritanical criticism towards Shakespeare is, most certainly, improved; yet the cure is not complete.

It is not many years since an English economist, a man of authority, making, in the midst of social questions, a literary excursion, affirmed in a lofty digression, and without exhibiting the slightest diffidence, this:—"Shakespeare cannot live because he has treated specially foreign or ancient subjects: 'Hamlet,' 'Othello,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Macbeth,' 'Lear,' 'Julius Cæsar,' 'Coriolanus,' 'Timon of Athens,' &c. &c.; now, nothing is likely to live in literature except matters of immediate observation and works made on cotemporary subjects."—What say you to the theory? We would not mention it if this system had not met approvers in England and propagators in France. Besides Shakespeare, it simply excludes from literary "life" Schiller, Corneille, Milton, Virgil, Euripides, Sophocles, Æschylus, and Homer. It is true that

uttering of the name of the Divinity on the stage. It is worthy of remark that our modern theatre has had to undergo, under the scissors of the censorship of the Bourbons, the same stupid mutilations to which the censorship of the Stuarts condemned the theatre of Shakespeare. I read what follows in the first page of the manuscript of "Hernani," which I have in my hands:

"Received at the Théâtre-Français, Oct. 8, 1829.

"The Stage-manager,

"ALBERTIN."

And lower down, in red ink:

"On condition of expunging the name of "Jesus" wherever found, and conforming to the alterations marked at pages 27, 28, 29, 62, 74, and 76.

"Le ministre Secrétaire d'Etat du département de l'intérieur,

"LA BOURDONNAYE."

(Tome XI. Notes on "Richard II." and "Henry IV.," note 71, p. 462.)

We may add that in the scenery representing Saragossa (second act of "Hernani") it was forbidden to put any belfry or any church, which made resemblance rather difficult, Saragossa having in the sixteenth century three hundred and nine churches and six hundred and seventeen convents.

it surrounds with a halo of glory Aulus-Gellius and Restif of Bretonne. O critic, this Shakespeare is not likely to live, he is only immortal!

About the same time, another, English also, but of the Scotch school, a puritan of that discontented variety of which Knox is the head, declared poetry childishness, repudiated beauty of style as an obstacle interposed between the idea and the reader, saw in Hamlet's soliloquy only "a cold lyricism," and in Othello's adieu to standards and camps only "a declamation;" likened the metaphors of poets to illustrations in books, good for amusing babies, and showed a particular contempt for Shakespeare, as besmeared from one end to the other with that "illuminating process."

Not later than last January, a witty London paper, with indignant irony, was asking which is the most celebrated, in England, Shakespeare or "Mr. Calcraft, the hangman:"—"There are localities in this enlightened country where, if you pronounce the name of Shakespeare they will answer you: 'I don't know what this Shakespeare may be about whom you make all this fuss, but I will back Hammer Lane of Birmingham to fight him for five pounds.' But no mistake is made about Calcraft."—(*Daily Telegraph*, 13 Jan., 1864.)

CHAPTER IV.

At all events, Shakespeare has not the monument that England owes to Shakespeare.

France, let me admit, is not, in like cases, much more speedy. Another glory, very different from Shakespeare, but not less grand, Joan of Arc, waits also, and has waited longer for a national monument, a monument worthy of her.

This land which has been Gaul, and where the Velledas reigned, has, in a catholic and historic sense, for patronesses two august figures, Mary and Joan. The one, holy, is the Virgin; the other, heroic, is the Maid. Louis XIII. gave France to the one; the other has given France to France. The monument of the second should not be less high than the monument of the first. Joan of Arc must have a trophy as grand as Notre Dame. When shall she have it?

England has been bankrupt towards Shakespeare, but France has been bankrupt towards Joan of Arc.

These ingratitudes require to be sternly denounced. Doubtless the governing aristocracies, which blind the eyes of the masses, deserve the first accusation of guilt, but, on the whole, conscience exists for a people as for an individual, ignorance is only an attenuating circumstance, and when these denials of justice last for centuries, they remain the fault of governments, but become the fault of nations. Let us know, when necessary, how to tell nations of their shortcomings. France and England, you are wrong.

To flatter peoples would be worse than to flatter kings. The one is base, the other would be cowardly.

Let us go further, and since this thought has been presented to us, let us generalize it usefully, even if we should leave our subject for a while. No, the people have not the right to throw indefinitely the fault upon governments. The acceptation of oppression by the oppressed ends in becoming complicity; cowardice is consent whenever the duration of a bad thing, which presses on the people, and which the people could prevent if they would, goes beyond the amount of patience endurable by an honest man; there is an appreciable solidarity and a partnership in shame between the government guilty of the evil and the people allowing it to be done. To suffer is worthy of veneration, to submit is worthy of contempt. Let us pass on.

A noteworthy coincidence: the man who denies Shakespeare, Voltaire, is also the insulter of Joan of Arc. But then what is Voltaire? Voltaire—we may say it with joy and sadness—is the French mind. Let us understand, it is the French mind, up to the Revolution exclusively. From the French Revolution, France increasing in greatness, the French mind grows larger, and tends to become the European mind. It is less local and more fraternal, less Gallic and more human. It represents more and more Paris, the city heart of the world. As for Voltaire, he remains as he is, the man of the future, but also the man of the past. He is one of those glories which make the thinker say yes and no; he has against him two sarcasms, Joan of Arc and Shakespeare. He is punished through what he sneered at.

CHAPTER V.

In truth, a monument to Shakespeare, *cui bono?* The statue that he has made for himself is worth more, with all England for a pedestal. Shakespeare has no need of a pyramid; he has his work.

What do you suppose marble could do for him? What can bronze do where there is glory? Malachite and alabaster are of no avail, jasper, serpentine, basalt, red porphyry, such as that at the Invalides, granite, Paros and Carrara, are of no use; genius is genius without them. Even if all the stones had a part in it, would they make that man an inch greater? What vault shall be more indestructible than this: "The Winter's Tale," "The Tempest," "The Merry Wives of Windsor," "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," "Julius Cæsar," "Coriolanus"? What monument more grandiose than "Lear," more wild than "The Merchant of Venice," more dazzling than "Romeo and Juliet," more amazing than "Richard III."? What moon could throw on that building a light more mysterious than "The Midsummer Night's Dream"? What capital, were it even London, could produce around it a rumour so gigantic as the tumultuous soul of "Macbeth"? What framework of cedar or of oak will last as long as "Othello"? What bronze will be bronze as much as "Hamlet"? No construction of lime, of rock, of iron and of cement, is worth the breath. The deep breath of genius, which is the breathing of God through man. A head in which is an idea, such is the summit; heaps of stone and brick would be useless efforts. What edifice equals a

thought? Babel is below Isaiah; Cheops is less than Homer; the Coliseum is inferior to Juvenal; the Giralda of Seville is dwarfish by the side of Cervantes; St. Peter of Rome does not reach to the ankle of Dante. How would you manage to build a tower as high as that name: Shakespeare?

Ah! add something, if you can, to a mind!

Suppose a monument. Suppose it splendid, suppose it sublime. A triumphal arch, an obelisk, a circus with a pedestal in the centre, a cathedral. No people is more illustrious, more noble, more magnificent and more magnanimous than the English people. Couple these two ideas, England and Shakespeare, and make an edifice arise therefrom. Such a nation celebrating such a man, it will be superb. Imagine the monument, imagine the inauguration. The Peers are there, the Commons give their adherence, the bishops officiate, the princes join the procession, the Queen is present. The virtuous woman in whom the English people, royalist as we know, see and venerate their actual personification, this worthy mother, this noble widow, comes with the deep respect which is called for, to incline material majesty before ideal majesty; the Queen of England salutes Shakespeare; the homage of Victoria repairs the disdain of Elizabeth. As for Elizabeth, she is probably there also, sculptured somewhere on the surbase, with Henry VIII., her father, and James I., her successor, pigmies beneath the poet. The cannon booms, the curtain falls, they uncover the statue which seems to say: At length! and which has grown in the shade during three hundred years; three centuries, the growth of a colossus: an immensity. All the York, Cumberland, Pitt, and Peel bronzes have been made use of, in order to produce this statue; the public places have been disencumbered of a heap of uncalled-for metal-castings: in this lofty figure have been amalgamated all kinds of Henrys and Edwards, the various Williams, and the numerous

Georges have been melted, the Achilles in Hyde Park has made the great-toe; this is fine, behold Shakespeare almost as great as a Pharaoh or a Sesostris. Bells, drums, trumpets, applause, hurrahs!

What then?

It is honourable for England, indifferent to Shakespeare.

What is the salutation of royalty, of aristocracy, of the army, and even of the English populace, ignorant yet to this moment, like nearly all other nations, what is the salutation of all these groups variously enlightened to him who has the eternal acclamation, with its reverberation, of all ages and all men! What orison of the Bishop of London or of the Archbishop of Canterbury is worth the cry of a woman before Desdemona, of a mother before Arthur, of a soul before Hamlet?

And thus, when universal outcry demands from England a monument to Shakespeare, it is not for the sake of Shakespeare, it is for the sake of England.

There are cases in which the repayment of a debt is of greater import to the debtor than to the creditor.

A monument is an example. The lofty head of a great man is a light. Crowds, like the waves, require beacons above them. It is good that the passer-by should know that there are great men. People may not have time to read; they are forced to see. People pass by that way, and stumble against the pedestal; they are almost obliged to raise the head and to glance a little at the inscription; men escape a book, they cannot escape the statue. One day on the bridge of Rouen, before the beautiful statue due to David d'Angers, a peasant mounted on an ass said to me, "Do you know Pierre Corneille?"—"Yes," I replied.—"So do I," he rejoined.—"And do you know 'The Cid'?" I resumed.—"No," said he.

To him, Corneille was the statue.

This beginning in the knowledge of great men is

necessary to the people. The monument incites them to know more of the man. They desire to learn to read in order to know what this bronze means. A statue is an elbow-thrust to ignorance.

There is then, in the execution of such monuments, popular utility as well as national justice.

To perform what is useful at the same time as what is just, that will at the end certainly tempt England. She is the debtor of Shakespeare. To leave such a debt in abeyance is not a good attitude for the pride of a people. It is a point of morality that nations should be good payers in matters of gratitude. Enthusiasm is probity. When a man is a glory in the face of his nation, that nation which does not perceive the fact astounds the human race around.

CHAPTER VI.

ENGLAND, an end which it is easy to foresee, will build a monument to her poet.

At the very moment we finished writing the pages you have just read, was announced in London the formation of a Committee for the solemn celebration of the three-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Shakespeare. This Committee will dedicate to Shakespeare, on the 23rd April, 1864, a monument and a festival which will surpass, we doubt not, the incomplete programme we have just sketched out. They will spare nothing. The act of admiration will be a striking one. One may expect everything, in point of magnificence, from the nation which has created the prodigious palace at Sydenham, that Versailles of a people. The initiative taken by the Committee will draw in certainly the powers that be. We discard, for our part, and the Committee will discard, we think, all idea of a manifestation by subscription. A subscription, unless of one penny, that is to say, open to all the people, is necessarily fractional. What is due to Shakespeare is a national manifestation: a holiday, a public *fête*, a popular monument, voted by the Chambers and entered in the Budget. England would do it for her king. Now, what is the King of England beside the man of England? Every confidence is due to the Jubilee Committee of Shakespeare, a committee composed of persons highly distinguished in the press, the peerage, literature, the stage, and the church. Eminent men from all countries, representing intellect in France, in Germany, in Belgium, in Spain,

in Italy, complete this Committee, in all points of view excellent and competent. Another Committee, formed at Stratford-on-Avon, seconds the London Committee. We congratulate England.

Nations have a hard ear and a long life; that which causes their deafness is in no way irreparable. They have time to alter their mind. The English are awake at last to their glory. England begins to spell that name, Shakespeare, upon which the universe has laid her finger.

In April, 1664, it was a hundred years since Shakespeare was born. England was occupied in cheering loudly Charles II., who had sold Dunkirk to France for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling, and in looking at something that was a skeleton and had been Cromwell, whitening under the north-east wind and rain on the gallows at Tyburn. In April, 1764, it was two hundred years since Shakespeare was born: England was contemplating the dawn of George III., a king destined to imbecility, who, at that epoch, in secret councils, and in somewhat unconstitutional asides with the Tory chiefs and the German Landgraves, was sketching out that policy of resistance to progress which was to strive, first against liberty in America, then against democracy in France, and which, only under the ministry of the first Pitt, had, in 1778, raised the debt of England to the sum of eighty millions sterling. In April, 1864, three hundred years since Shakespeare's birth, England raises a statue to Shakespeare. It is late, but it is well.

BOOK II.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

The nineteenth century springs from itself only; it does not receive its impulse from any ancestor: it is the offspring of an idea. Doubtless, Isaiah, Homer, Aristotle, Dante, Shakespeare, have been or could be great starting-points for important philosophical or poetical formations; but the nineteenth century has an august mother, the French Revolution. It has that powerful blood in its veins. It honours men of genius. When denied it salutes them, when ignored it proclaims them, when persecuted it avenges them, when insulted it crowns them, when dethroned, it replaces them upon their pedestal; it venerates them, but it does not proceed from them. The nineteenth century has for family itself and itself alone. It is the characteristic of its revolutionary nature to dispense with ancestors.

Itself a genius, it fraternizes with men of genius. As for its source, it is where theirs is—beyond man. The mysterious gestations of progress succeed each other according to a providential law. The nineteenth century is born of civilization. It has a continent to bring into the world. France has borne this century, and this century bears Europe.

The Greek group has been civilization, narrow and circumscribed at first by the mulberry leaf, confined to the Morea; then civilization, gaining step by step, grew broader, and has formed the Roman group. It is to-day the French group, that is to say, all Europe; with young shoots in America, Africa, and Asia.

The greatest of these young shoots is a democracy, the United States, the sprouting of which was aided by France in the last century. France, sublime essayist in progress, has founded a republic in America before making one in Europe. *Et vidit quod esset bonum.* After having lent to Washington an auxiliary, Lafayette, France, returning home, gave to Voltaire, dismayed within his tomb, that formidable successor, Danton. In presence of the monstrous past, hurling every thunder, exhaling every miasma, breathing every darkness, protruding every talon, horrible and terrible, progress, constrained to use the same weapons, has had suddenly a hundred arms, a hundred heads, a hundred tongues of fire, a hundred roarings. The good has transformed itself into a hydra. It is this that is termed the Revolution.

Nothing can be more august.

The Revolution ended one century and began another.

A shock in intellects prepares the way for an overthrow of facts; it is the eighteenth century. After which the political revolution, once accomplished, seeks for its expression, and the literary and social revolution completes it. It is the nineteenth century. Romantism and Socialism, it has been said, with ill-will, but with justice, are the same fact. Hatred, in its desire to injure, very often authenticates, and, so far as is in its power, consolidates.

A parenthesis. This word Romantism, has, like all war cries, the advantage of readily summing up a group of ideas; it is brief, which pleases in the contest; but it has, to our idea, through its militant signification, the objection of appearing to limit the

movement that it represents to a warlike action. Now this movement is a matter of intellect, a matter of civilization, a matter of soul; and this is why the writer of these lines has never used the words Romantism or Romantic. They will not be found in any of the pages of criticism that he has had occasion to write. If to-day he derogates from his usual prudence in polemics, it is for the sake of greater rapidity and with all reservation. The same observation may be made on the subject of the word Socialism, which admits of so many different interpretations.

The triple movement, literary, philosophical, and social, of the nineteenth century, which is one single movement, is nothing but the current of the revolution in ideas. This current, after having swept away facts, is perpetuated in minds with all its immensity.

This word, *literary* '93, so often quoted in 1830 against contemporaneous literature, was not so much an insult as it was intended to be. It was certainly as unjust to employ it as characterizing the whole literary movement, as it is iniquitous to employ it to describe all the political revolutions: there is in these two phenomena something besides '93. But this word, literary '93, was relatively exact, insomuch as it indicated, confusedly but truthfully, the origin of the literary movement which belongs to our epoch, whilst endeavouring to dishonour that movement. Here again the clairvoyance of hatred was blind. Its daubings of mud upon the face of truth are gilding, light, and glory.

The Revolution, turning climacteric of humanity, is made up of several years. Each of these years expresses a period, represents an aspect, or realizes a phase of the phenomenon. '93, tragic, is one of those colossal years. Good news must sometimes have a mouth of bronze. '93 is that mouth.

Listen to the immense proclamation proceeding from

it. Incline yourselves, remain struck with awe, and be touched. God himself said the first time *Fiat lux*, the second time he has caused it to be said.

By whom?

By '93.

Therefore, we men of the nineteenth century hold in honour that reproach, "You are '93."

But do not stop there. We are '89 as well as '93. The Revolution, the whole Revolution, such is the source of the literature of the nineteenth century.

On these grounds put it on its trial, this literature, or seek its triumph; hate it or love it. According to the amount of the future that you have in you, outrage it or salute it; little do animosities and fury matter to it! It is the logical deduction from the great chaotic and genesiacal fact that our fathers have witnessed, and which has given a new starting-point to the world. He who is against that fact is against that literature; he who is for that fact is on its side. What the fact is worth the literature is worth. The reactionary writers are not mistaken; wherever there is revolution, patent or latent, the Catholic and royalist scent is unfailing. Those men of letters of the past award to contemporaneous literature an honourable amount of diatribe; their aversion is convulsive. One of their journalists, who is, I believe, a bishop, pronounces this word "poet" with the same accent as the word "Septembriseur;" another, less of a bishop, but quite as angry, writes, "I feel in all this literature Marat and Robespierre." This last writer is rather mistaken; there is in "this literature" Danton rather than Marat.

But the fact is true. Democracy is in this literature.

The Revolution has forged the clarion; the nineteenth century sounds it.

Ah! this affirmation suits us, and, in truth, we do

not recoil before it, we avow our glory, we are revolutionary. The thinkers of the present time, poets, writers, historians, orators, philosophers, all, all, all, are derived from the French Revolution. They come from it, and it alone. '89 demolished the Bastille; '93 took the crown from the Louvre. From '89 sprung Deliverance, and from '93 Victory. '89 and '93; the men of the nineteenth century proceed from thence. There are their father and their mother. Do not seek for them another affiliation, another inspiration, another insufflation, another origin. They are the democrats of the idea, successors to the democrats of action. They are the emancipators. The idea Liberty bent over their cradles. They all have sucked that vast breast; they all have that milk in their entrails, that marrow in their bones, that sap in their will, that revolt in their reason, that flame in their intellect.

Even those among them, there are some, who were born aristocrats, who came to the world banished in some degree amongst families of the past, who have fatally received one of those primary educations whose stupid effort is to contradict progress, and who have commenced the words that they had to say to our century with an indescribable royalist stuttering, these, from that period, from their infancy, they will not contradict me, felt the sublime monster within them. They had the inner ebullition of the immense fact. They had in the depth of their conscience a whispering of mysterious ideas; the inward shock of false certainties troubled their mind; they felt their sombre surface of monarchism, catholicism, and aristocracy tremble, shudder, and by degrees split up. One day, all at once, abruptly, the swelling of truth within them prevailed, the hatching was completed, the eruption took place, the light opened them, made them burst, did not fall on them, but, more beautiful marvel, gushed out of them, stupefied, and enlightened

them whilst it burned within them. They were craters unknown to themselves.

This phenomenon has been reproached to them as a treason. They passed over, in fact, from right divine to human right. They turned their back on false history, on false tradition, on false dogmas, on false philosophy, on false daylight, on false truth. The free spirit which soars up, bird called by aurora, offends intellects saturated with ignorance and the fœtus preserved in spirits of wine. He who sees offends the blind: he who hears makes the deaf indignant; he who walks offers an abominable insult to cripples. In the eyes of dwarfs, abortions, Aztecs, myrmidons, and pigmies, for ever tied to rachitis, growth is apostasy.

The writers and poets of the nineteenth century have the admirable good fortune of proceeding from a genesis, of arriving after an end of the world, of accompanying a reappearance of light, of being the organs of a new beginning. This imposes on them duties unknown to their predecessors, the duties of intentional reformers and direct civilizers. They continue nothing; they re-make everything. For new times, new duties. The function of thinkers in our days is complex; to think is no longer sufficient; they must love; to think and love is no longer sufficient, they must act; to think, to love, and to act, no longer suffices, they must suffer. Lay down the pen, and go where you hear the grape-shot. Here is a barricade; be one on it. Here is exile; accept it. Here is the scaffold, be it so. Let John Brown be in Montesquieu, if needful. The Lucretius required by this century in labour should contain Cato. Æschylus, who wrote the "Orestias," had for a brother Cynegyrus, who fastened with his teeth on the ships of the enemies; that was sufficient for Greece at the time of Salamis; that no longer suffices for France after the Revolution. Æschylus and Cynegyrus brothers, it is but little;

they must be the same man. Such are the actual requirements of progress. Those who devote themselves to great and pressing things can never be too great. To set ideas in motion, to heap up evidence, to pile up principles, that is the redoubtable movement. To heap Pelion on Ossa is the labour of infants beside that work of giants, the placing of right upon truth. To scale that afterwards, and to dethrone usurpations in the midst of thunders, such is the work.

The future presses. To-morrow cannot wait. Humanity has not a minute to lose. Quick, quick, let us hasten; the wretched ones have their feet on red-hot iron. They hunger, they thirst, they suffer. Ah, terrible emaciation of the poor human body! Parasitism laughs, the ivy grows green and thrives, the mistletoe is flourishing, the tapeworm is happy. What a frightful object the prosperity of the tapeworm! To destroy that which devours, in that is safety. Your life has within itself death, which is in good health. There is too much misery, too much desolation, too much immodesty, too much nakedness, too many bawdy-houses, too many bagnes, too many tatters, too many faintings, too many crimes, too much darkness, not enough schools, too many little innocents growing up for evil! the truckle-bed of poor girls is suddenly covered with silk and lace—and in that is worse misery; by the side of misfortune there is vice, the one urging the other. Such a society requires prompt succour. Let us seek for the best. Go all of you in this search. Where are the promised lands? Civilization would go forward; let us try theories, systems, ameliorations, inventions, progress, until the shoe for that foot shall be found. The attempt costs nothing, or costs but little. To attempt is not to adopt. But before all, above all, let us be lavish of light. All sanitary purification begins in opening windows wide. Let us open wide all intellects. Let us supply souls with air.

Quick, quick, O thinkers! Let the human race breathe. Give hope, give the ideal, do good. One step after another, horizon after horizon, conquest after conquest, because you have given what you promised do not think you have performed all that is required of you. To possess is to promise. The dawn of to-day imposes on the sun obligations for to-morrow.

Let nothing be lost. Let not one strength be isolated. Every one to work! there is vast urgency for it. No more idle art. Poetry the worker of civilization, what more admirable? the dreamer should be a pioneer; the strophe should mean something. The beautiful should be at the service of honesty. I am the voice of my conscience; it rings for me, I come. Go! I go. What do you require of me, O truth, sole majesty of this world? Let each one feel a haste to do well. A book is sometimes a help looked forward to. An idea is a balm, a word may be a dressing for wounds; poetry a physician. Let no one tarry. Suffering is losing its strength whilst you are idling. Let men leave this dreamy laziness. Leave the kief to the Turks. Let men labour for the safety of all and let them rush into it and be out of breath. Do not be sparing of your strides. Nothing useless. No inertia. What do you call dead nature? Everything lives. The duty of all is to live—to walk, to run, to fly, to soar, is the universal law. What do you wait for? Who stops you? Ah, there are times when one might wish to hear the stones murmur at the slowness of man!

Sometimes one goes into the woods. To whom does it not happen at times to be overwhelmed?—one sees so many sad things. The stage is a long one to go over, the consequences are long in coming, a generation is behindhand, the work of the age languishes. What! so many sufferings yet! One might think he has gone backwards. There is everywhere increase of superstition, of cowardice, of deafness, of blindness, of

imbecility. Penal laws weigh upon brutishness. That wretched problem has been set; to augment comfort by putting off right; to sacrifice the superior side of man to the inferior side; to yield up principle to appetite; Cæsar takes charge for the belly, I make over to him the brains; it is the old sale of a birthright for the dish of porridge. A little more, and this fatal anomaly would cause a wrong road to be taken towards civilization. The fattening pig would no longer be the king, but the people. Alas, this ugly expedient does not even succeed. No diminution whatever of the malady. In the last ten years—for the last twenty years—the low water-mark of prostitution, of mendicity, of crime, gives always the same amount; evil has not lowered one degree. Of true education, of gratuitous education, there is none. The infant nevertheless requires to know that he is man, and the father that he is citizen. Where are the promises? Where is the hope? Oh, poor wretched humanity! one is tempted to shout for help in the forest; one is tempted to claim support, assistance, and a strong arm from that grand mournful nature. Can this mysterious *ensemble* of forces be indifferent to progress? We supplicate, appeal, raise our hands towards the shadow. We listen, wondering if the rustlings will become voices. The duty of the springs and streams should be to babble forth the word "Forward!" one could wish to hear nightingales sing new Marseillaises.

After all, nevertheless, these times of halting are nothing beyond what is normal. Discouragement would be puerile. There are halts, repose, breathing spaces in the march of peoples, as there are winters in the progress of the seasons. The gigantic step, '89, is all the same a fact. To despair would be absurd; but to stimulate is necessary.

To stimulate, to press, to chide, to awaken, to suggest, to inspire, it is this function, fulfilled every-

where by writers, which impresses on the literature of this century so high a character of power and originality. To remain faithful to all the laws of art, whilst combining them with the law of progress, such is the problem victoriously solved by so many noble and proud minds.

There this word Deliverance, which appears above everything in the light, as if it were written on the very forehead of the ideal.

The Revolution is France sublimed. There was a day when France was in the furnace; the furnace causes wings to grow on certain warlike martyrs, and from amidst the flames this giant came forth archangel. At this day by all the world France is called Revolution; and henceforth this word Revolution will be the name of civilization, until it can be replaced by the word Harmony. I repeat it, do not seek elsewhere the starting point and the birth-place of the literature of the nineteenth century. Yes, as many as there be of us, great and small, powerful and unknown, illustrious and obscure, in all our works, good or bad, whatever they may be, poems, dramas, romances, history, philosophy, at the tribune of assemblies as before the crowds of the theatre, as in the meditation of solitudes, yes, everywhere, yes always, yes, to combat violence and imposture, yes, to rehabilitate those who are stoned and run down, yes, to sum up logically and to march straight onward, yes, to console, to succour, to relieve, to encourage, to teach, yes, to dress wounds in hope of curing them, yes, to transform charity into fraternity, alms into assistance, sluggishness into work, idleness into utility, centralization into a family, iniquity into justice, the bourgeois into the citizen, the populace into the people, the rabble into the nation, nations into humanity, war into love, prejudice into free examination, frontiers into solderings, limits into openings, ruts into rails, vestry-rooms into temples, the instinct of evil into the desire of good,

life into right, kings into men, yes, to deprive religions of hell and societies of the galley, yes, to be brothers to the wretched, the serf, the fellah, the prolétaire, the disinherited, the banished, the betrayed, the conquered, the sold, the enchained, the sacrificed, the prostitute, the convict, the ignorant, the savage, the slave, the negro, the condemned, and the damned, yes, we are thy sons, Revolution!

Yes, men of genius, yes, poets, philosophers, historians, yes, giants of that great art of previous ages which is all the light of the past, O men eternal, the minds of this day salute you, but do not follow you: they hold in respect to you to this law: to admire everything, to imitate nothing. Their function is no longer yours. They have business with the virility of the human race. The hour which makes mankind of age has struck. We assist, under the full light of the ideal, at that majestic junction of the beautiful with the useful. No actual or possible genius can surpass you, ye men of genius of old; to equal you is all the ambition allowed: but, to equal you, one must conform to the necessities of our time, as you supplied the necessities of yours. Writers who are sons of the Revolution have a holy task. O Homer, their epic poem must weep, O Herodotus, their history must protest, O Juvenal, their satire must dethrone, O Shakespeare, their "thou shalt be king," must be said to the people, O Æschylus, their Prometheus must strike Jupiter with thunderbolts, O Job, their dunghill must be fruitful, O Dante, their hell must be extinguished, O Isaiah, thy Babylon crumbles, theirs must blaze forth with light! They do what you have done; they contemplate creation directly, they observe humanity directly; they do not accept as a guiding light any refracted ray, not even yours. Like you, they have for their sole starting point, outside them, universal being, in them, their soul; they have for the source of their work the one

source whence flows nature and whence flows art, the infinite. As the writer of these lines said forty years ago,* "The poets and the writers of the nineteenth century have neither masters nor models." No, in all that vast and sublime art of all peoples, in all those grand creations of all epochs, no, not even thee, Æschylus, not even thee, Dante, not even thee, Shakespeare, no, they have neither models nor masters. And why have they neither masters nor models? It is because they have one model, Man, and because they have one master, God.

* Preface to "Cromwell."

BOOK III.

TRUE HISTORY—EVERY ONE PUT IN HIS RIGHT PLACE.

CHAPTER I.

HERE is the advent of the new constellation.

It is certain that at the present hour that which has been till now the light of the human race grows pale, and that the old flame is about to disappear from the world.

The men of brutal force have, since human tradition exists, shone alone in the Empyrean of history. They were the only supremacy. Under all these names, kings, emperors, captains, chiefs, princes, summed up in the word heroes, this group of an apocalypse was resplendent. They were all dripping with victories. Terror transformed itself into acclamation to salute them. They dragged after them an indescribable tumultuous flame. They appeared to man in a disorder of horrible light. They did not light up the heavens; they set them on fire. They looked as if they meant to take possession of the infinite. Rumbling crashes were heard in their glory. A red glare mingled with it. Was it purple? Was it blood? Was it shame? Their light made one think of the face of Cain. They hated each other. Flashing shocks passed from one to the other; at times these enormous planets came

into collision, striking out lightnings. Their look was furious. Their radiancy stretched out into swords. All that hung terrible above us.

That tragic glare fills the past. To-day it is in full process of decrease.

There is decline in war, decline in despotism, decline in theocracy, decline in slavery, decline in the scaffold. The blade becomes shorter, the tiara is fading away, the crown is simplified, war is raving, the plume bends lower, usurpation is circumscribed, the chain is lightened, the rack is out of countenance. The antique violence of the few against all, called right divine, is coming to an end. Legitimacy, the grace of God, the monarchy of Pharamond, nations branded on the shoulder with the fleur-de-lys, the possession of peoples by the right of birth, the long series of ancestors giving right over the living, these things are yet striving in some places, at Naples, in Prussia, &c., but they are struggling rather than striving; it is death that strains for life. A stammering which to-morrow will be speech, and the day after to-morrow a verb, proceeds from the bruised lips of the serf, of the vassal, of the proletaire, of the pariah. The gag breaks up between the teeth of the human race. The human race has had enough of the sorrowful path, and the patient refuses to go further.

From this very time certain forms of despotism are no longer possible. The Pharaoh is a mummy, the sultan is a phantom, the Cæsar is a counterfeit. This stylite of the Trajan columns is anchylosed on its pedestal; it has on its head the excrement of free eagles; it is nihility rather than glory; the bands of the sepulchre fasten this crown of laurels.

The period of the men of brutal force is gone. They have been glorious, certainly, but with a glory that melts away. That species of great men is soluble in progress. Civilization rapidly oxidizes these

bronzes. At the point of maturity to which the French Revolution has already brought the universal conscience, the hero is no longer a hero without a good reason, the captain is discussed, the conqueror is inadmissible. In our days Louis XIV. invading the Palatinate would look like a robber. From the last century these realities commenced to dawn. Frederick II., in the presence of Voltaire, felt and owned himself somewhat of a brigand. To be a great man of matter, to be pompously violent, to govern by the sword-knot and the cockade, to forge right upon force, to hammer out justice and truth by blows of accomplished facts, to make brutalities of genius, is to be grand, if you like, but it is a coarse manner of being grand. Glories announced with drums which are met with a shrug of the shoulders. Sonorous heroes have deafened human reason until to-day. That pompous noise begins now to weary it. It shuts its eyes and ears before those authorized slaughters that they call battles. The sublime murderers of men have had their time. It is in a certain relative forgetfulness that henceforth they will be illustrious and august. Humanity, become greater, requires to dispense with them. The food for guns thinks. It reflects, and is actually losing its admiration for being shot down by a cannon-ball.

A few figures by the way may not be useless.

All tragedy is part of our subject. The tragedy of poets is not the only one; there is the tragedy of politicians and statesmen. Would you like to know how much that tragedy costs?

Heroes have an enemy; that enemy is called finance. For a long time the amount of money paid for that kind of glory was ignored. In order to disguise the total, there were convenient little fire-places like that in which Louis XIV. burned the accounts of Versailles. That day passed out the chimney of the royal stove the smoke of one thousand millions of francs. The

nation did not even take notice. At the present day nations have one great virtue—they are miserly. They know that prodigality is the mother of abasement. They reckon up. They learn book-keeping by double entry. Warlike glory henceforth has its debit and credit account. That renders it impossible.

The greatest warrior of modern times is not Napoleon, it is Pitt. Napoleon carried on warfare, Pitt created it. It is Pitt who willed all the wars of the Revolution and of the Empire. They proceeded from him. Take away Pitt and put Fox in his place, there would then be no reason for that exorbitant battle of twenty-three years. There would be no longer any coalition. Pitt was the soul of the coalition, and, he dead, his soul remained amidst the universal war. What Pitt cost England and the world, here it is. We add this bas-relief to his pedestal.

In the first place, the expenditure in men, from 1791 to 1814, France alone, striving against Europe, coalesced by England, France constrained and compelled, expended in butcheries for military glory, and also, let us add, for the defence of territory, five millions of men—that is to say, six hundred men per day. Europe, including the total of France, has expended sixteen millions six hundred thousand men—that is to say, two thousand deaths per day during twenty-three years.

Secondly, the expenditure of money. We have, unfortunately, no authentic total, save the total of England. From 1791 to 1814, England, in order to make France succumb to Europe, became indebted to the extent of eighty-one millions, two hundred and sixty-five thousand, eight hundred and forty-two pounds sterling. Divide this total by the total of men killed, at the rate of two thousand per day for twenty-three years, you arrive at this result, that each corpse stretched on the field of battle has cost England alone fifty pounds sterling.

Add the total of Europe; total unknown, but enormous.

With these seventeen millions of dead men, they might have peopled Australia with Europeans. With the eighty millions expended by England in cannon-shots, they might have changed the face of the earth, begun the work of civilization everywhere, and suppressed throughout the entire world ignorance and misery.

England pays eighty millions for the two statues of Pitt and Wellington.

It is a fine thing to have heroes, but it is an expensive luxury. Poets cost less.

CHAPTER II.

The discharge of the warrior is signed. It is splendour in the distance. The great Nimrod, the great Cyrus, the great Sennacherib, the great Sesostris, the great Alexander, the great Pyrrhus, the great Hannibal, the great Cæsar, the great Timour, the great Louis, the great Frederic, and more great ones, all are going away.

It would be a mistake to think that we reject these men purely and simply. In our eyes, five or six of those that we have named are legitimately illustrious; they have even mingled something good in their ravages; their definitive total embarrasses the absolute equity of the thinker, and they weigh nearly even weights in the balance of the injurious and the useful.

Others have been only injurious. They are numerous, innumerable even, for the masters of the world are a crowd.

The thinker is the weigher. Clemency suits him. Let us therefore say, those others who have done only evil have one attenuating circumstance—imbecility.

They have another excuse yet: the mental condition of the human race itself at the moment they appeared; the medium surrounding facts, modifiable, but encumbering.

Tyrants are not men, they are things. Tyrants are called frontier, track, routine, blindness under the form of fanaticism, deafness and dumbness under the form of diversity of languages, quarrel under the form of diversity of weights, measures, and moneys, hatred resulting from quarrel, war resulting

from hatred. All these tyrants may be called by one name—Separation. Division, whence proceeds Reign, is the despot in the abstract state.

Even the tyrants of flesh are things. Caligula is much more a fact than a man. He is a result more than an existence. The Roman proscriber, dictator, or Cæsar, refuses the vanquished fire and water—that is to say, puts his life out. One day of Gela represents twenty thousand proscribed, one day of Tiberius thirty thousand, one day of Sylla seventy thousand. One evening Vitellius, being ill, sees a house lighted up; people were rejoicing there. "Do they think me dead?" says Vitellius. It is Junius Blesus who sups with Tuscus Cæcina; the emperor sends to these drinkers a cup of poison, that they may realize by this sinister end of too joyous a night that Vitellius is living. *Reddendam pro intempestiva licentia mœstam et funebrem noctem qua sentiat vivere Vitellium et imperare.* Otho and this same Vitellius forward assassins to one another. Under the Cæsars, it is a marvel to die in one's bed. Pison, to whom this happened, is noted for that strange incident. The garden of Valerius Asiaticus pleases the emperor, the face of Statilius displeases the empress: state crimes; Valerius is strangled because he has a garden, and Statilius because he has a face. Basil II., Emperor of the East, makes fifteen thousand Bulgarians prisoners; they are divided into bands of a hundred, and their eyes are put out, with the exception of one, charged to conduct the ninety-nine blind men. He afterwards sends into Bulgaria the whole of this army without eyes. History thus describes Basil II.: "He was too fond of glory" (Delandine). Paul of Russia gave out this axiom: "There is no man powerful but he to whom the emperor speaks, and his power endures as long as the word that he hears." Philip V. of Spain, so ferociously calm at the *auto-da-fés*, is frightened at the idea of changing his shirt, and remains

six months in bed without washing and without trimming his nails, for fear of being poisoned by means of scissors, or by the water in the basin, or by his shirt, or by his shoes. Ivan, grandfather of Paul, had a woman put to the torture before making her lie in his bed, had a newly-married bride hanged, and placed the husband as sentinel by her side, to prevent the rope from being cut, had a father killed by his son, invented sawing men in two with a line, burns Bariatinski himself by slow fire, and, whilst the patient howls, brings the embers together with the end of his stick. Peter, in point of excellence, aspires to that of the executioner; he exercises himself in cutting off heads; at first he cuts off but five per day, little enough; but, with application, he succeeds in cutting off twenty-five. It is a talent for a czar to tear away a woman's breast with one blow of the knout. What are all those monsters? Symptoms. Furuncles in eruption; pus which oozes from a sickly body. They are scarcely more responsible than the total of an addition is responsible for the figures of the sum. Basil, Ivan, Philip, Paul, &c., &c., are the products of vast surrounding stupidity. The Greek clergy, for example, having this maxim, "Who can make us judges of those who are our masters?" it is quite natural that a czar, that same Ivan, should cause an archbishop to be sewn in a bear's skin and devoured by dogs. The czar is amused, it is quite right. Under Nero, the brother whose brother was killed goes to the temple to return thanks to the gods; under Ivan, a Boyard impaled employs his agony, which lasts for twenty-four hours, in repeating, "O God! protect the czar." The Princess Sanguzko is in tears; she presents, upon her knees, a supplication to Nicholas: she implores grace for her husband, she conjures the master to spare Sanguzko (a Pole guilty of loving Poland) the frightful journey to Siberia; Nicholas, mute, listens, takes the supplication, and

writes beneath it, "On foot." Then Nicholas goes into the streets, and the crowd throw themselves on his boot to kiss it. What have you to say? Nicholas is a madman, the crowd is a brute. From khan comes knez, from knez tzar, from tzar the czar. A series of phenomena, rather than an affiliation of men. That after this Ivan, you should have this Peter, after this Peter, this Nicholas, after this Nicholas, this Alexander, what more logical? You all rather contribute to this result. The tortured accept the torture. "This czar, half putrid, half frozen," as Madame de Staël says, you made him yourselves. To be a people, to be a force, and to look upon these things, is to find them good. To be there, is to give one's adhesion. He who assists at the crime, assists the crime. Inert presence is an encouraging abjection.

Let us add that a preliminary corruption began the complicity even before the crime was committed. A certain putrid fermentation of pre-existing baseness engenders the oppressor.

The wolf is the fact of the forest. It is the savage fruit of solitude without defence. Combine and group together silence, obscurity, easy victory, monstrous infatuation, prey offered from all parts, murder in security, the connivance of those who are around, weakness, want of weapons, abandonment, isolation; from the point of intersection of these things breaks forth the ferocious beast. A dark *ensemble* the cries of which are not heard produces the tiger. A tiger is a blindness hungered and armed. Is it a being? Scarcely. The claw of the animal knows no more than does the thorn of a plant. The fatal fact engenders the unconscious organism. In so far as personality is concerned, and putting aside killing for living's sake, the tiger does not exist. Mouravieff is mistaken if he thinks that he is a being.

Wicked men spring from bad things. Therefore let us correct the things.

And here we return to our starting point. An attenuating circumstance for despotism—idiocy.

That attenuating circumstance we have just pleaded.

Idiotic despots, a multitude, are the populace of the purple; but above them, beyond them, by the immeasurable distance which separates that which radiates from that which stagnates, there are despots men of genius.

There are the captains, the conquerors, the mighty men of war, the civilizers of force, the ploughmen of the sword.

Those, we have just named them; the truly great among them are called Cyrus, Sesostris, Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Napoleon, and, in the measure we have laid down we admire them.

But we admire them on the condition of their disappearance.

Make room for better ones! Make room for greater ones!

Those greater, those better ones, are they new? No. Their series is as ancient as the other; more ancient, perhaps, for the idea has preceded the act, and the thinker is anterior to the warrior; but their place was taken, taken violently. This usurpation is about to cease, their hour comes at last, their predominance gleams forth, civilization, returned to the true light, recognises them as its only founders; their series becomes clothed in light, and eclipses the rest; like the past, the future belongs to them; and henceforth it is they whom God will perpetuate.

CHAPTER III.

THAT history has to be re-made is evident. It has been nearly always written, up to the present time, from the miserable point of view of accomplished fact; it is time to write it from the point of view of principle.

And that, under penalty of nullity.

Royal gestures, warlike uproars, princely coronations, marriages, baptisms, and funerals, executions and fêtes, the finery of one crushing all, the triumph of being born king, the prowess of sword and axe, great empires, heavy taxes, the tricks played by chance upon chance, the universe having for a law the adventures of any being, provided he be crowned; the destiny of a century changed by a blow from the lance of a fool through the skull of an imbecile; the majestic fistula of Louis XIV.; the grave words of the moribund Emperor Mathias to his doctor trying for the last time to feel his pulse beneath his coverlet and making a mistake: *Erras, amice, hoc est membrum nostrum imperiale sacrocæsareum;* the dance with castanets of Cardinal Richelieu, disguised as a shepherd before the Queen of France, in the private villa of the Rue de Gaillon; Hildebrand completed by Cisneros; the little dogs of Henri III.; the various Potemkins of Catherine II., Orloff here, Godoy there, etc., a great tragedy with a petty intrigue; such was history up to our days, going only from the throne to the altar, lending one ear to Dangeau and another to dom Calmet, sanctimonious and not stern, not comprehending the true transitions

from one age to the other, incapable of distinguishing the climacteric crises of civilization, and making the human race mount upwards by ladders of silly dates, well versed in puerilities, ignorant of right, of justice, and of truth, and modelled far more upon Le Ragois than upon Tacitus.

So much so that in our days that Tacitus has been the object of strong attack.

Tacitus, on the other hand, we do not weary of insisting upon it, is, like Juvenal, like Suetonius and Lampridius, the object of a special and merited hatred. The day when, in the colleges, professors of rhetoric shall put Juvenal above Virgil, and Tacitus above Bossuet, will be the eve of the day in which the human race shall have been delivered; when all forms of oppression shall have disappeared, from the slave-owner up to the pharisee, from the cottage where the slave weeps to the chapel where the eunuch sings. Cardinal Du Perron, who received for Henri IV. blows from the Pope's stick, had the goodness to say, "I despise Tacitus."

Up to the epoch in which we live, history has been a courtier.

The double identification of the king with the nation and of the king with God, is the work of courtier history. The grace of God procreates the right divine. Louis XIV. says, "*L'état, c'est moi.*" Madame Du Barry, plagiarist of Louis XIV., calls Louis XV. "*La France,*" and the pompously haughty saying of the great Asiatic king of Versailles ends with "*La France, ton café f . . . . le camp.*"

Bossuet writes without hesitation, though palliating facts here and there, the frightful legend of those old thrones of antiquity covered with crimes, and, applying to the surface of things his vague theocratic declamation, satisfies himself by this formula: "God holds in his hand the hearts of kings." That is not the case, for two reasons: God has no hand, and kings have no heart.

We are only speaking, of course, of the kings of Assyria.

History, that old history of which we have spoken, is a kind person for princes. It shuts its eyes when a highness says, "History, do not look this way." It has, imperturbably, with the face of a harlot, denied the horrible casque for breaking skulls with an inner spike, destined by the Archduke of Austria for the advoyer Gundoldingen. At the present time, this machine is hung on a nail in the Hôtel de Ville of Lucerne. Anybody can go and see it; history denies it still. Moréri calls St. Bartholomew's day "a disturbance." Chaudon, another biographer, thus characterizes the author of the saying to Louis XV., cited above: "A lady of the court, Madame Du Barry." History accepts for an attack of apoplexy the mattress under which James II. of England stifled the Duke of Gloucester at Calais. Why is the head of the Infant Don Carlos separated from the trunk in his bier at the Escurial? Philip II., the father, answers: "It is because, the Infant having died a natural death, the coffin prepared for him was not found long enough, and they were obliged to cut off the head." History blindly believes in the coffin being too short. What! the father to have his son beheaded! Oh! fie! Only demagogues would say such things.

The ingenuousness of history glorifying the fact, whatever it may be, and however impious it may be, shines nowhere better than in Cantemir and Karamsin, the one a Turkish historian, the other a Russian historian. The Ottoman fact and the Muscovite fact evidence, when confronted and compared with each other, the Tartar identity. Moscow is not less sinisterly Asiatic than Stamboul. Ivan is in the one as Mustapha is in the other. The gradation is imperceptible between that Christianity and that Mahommedism. The Pope is brother of the Ulema, the Boyard of the Pacha, the knout of the bowstring, and the moujik of the mute. There is to men pass-

ing through the streets little difference between Selim who pierces them with arrows, and Basil who lets bears loose on them. Cantemir, a man of the South, an ancient Moldavian hospodar, long a Turkish subject, feels, although he has passed over to the Russians, that he does not displease the Czar Peter by deifying despotism, and he prostrates his metaphors before the sultans; this crouching upon the belly is oriental, and somewhat western also. The sultans are divine; their scimitar is sacred, their dagger is sublime, their exterminations are magnanimous, their parricides are good. They call themselves merciful as the furies are called Eumenides. The blood that they spill smokes in Cantemir with an odour of incense, and the vast slaughtering which is their reign blooms into glory. They massacre the people in the public interest. When I know not what padischah, Tiger IV. or Tiger VI. causes to be strangled one after the other his nineteen little brothers running frightened round the chamber, the Turkish native historian declares that "it was executing wisely the law of the empire." The Russian historian, Karamsin, is not less tender to the Tzar than was Cantemir to the Sultan. Nevertheless, let us say it, in comparison with Cantemir's, the fervency of Karamsin is lukewarmness. Thus Peter, killing his son Alexis, is glorified by Karamsin, but in the same tone in which we excuse a fault. It is not the acceptation pure and simple of Cantemir. Cantemir is more upon his knees. The Russian historian only admires, whilst the Turkish historian adores. No fire in Karamsin, no nerve, a dull enthusiasm, grayish apotheoses, good will struck into an icicle, caresses benumbed with cold. It is poor flattery. Evidently the climate has something to do with it. Karamsin is a chilled Cantemir.

Thus is the predominating portion of history made up to the present day; it goes from Bossuet to Karamsin, passing by the Abbé Pluche. That history

has for its principle obedience. To what is obedience due? To success. Heroes are well treated, but kings are preferred. To reign is to succeed every morning. A king has to-morrow. He is solvent. A hero may finish badly, such things happen. Then he is but an usurper. Before that history, genius itself, even should it be the highest expression of force held by intelligence, is compelled to continual success. If it fails, ridicule; if it falls, insult. After Marengo, you are Europe's hero, the man of Providence, anointed by the Lord; after Austerlitz, Napoleon the Great; after Waterloo, the ogre from Corsica. The Pope anointed an ogre.

Nevertheless, impartial, and in consideration of services rendered, Loriquet makes you a marquis.

The man of our day who has best executed that surprising gamut from Hero of Europe to Ogre of Corsica, is Fontanes, chosen during so many years to cultivate, develop, and direct the moral sense of youth.

Legitimacy, right divine, the negation of universal suffrage, the throne a fief, the nation a "majorat," proceed from that history. The executioner is part of it. Joseph de Maistre adds him, divinely, to the king. In England such history is called "loyal" history. The English aristocracy, to whom similar excellent ideas sometimes occur, have imagined a method of giving to a political opinion the name of a virtue, *Instrumentum regni.* In England, to be a royalist, is to be loyal. A democrat is disloyal. He is a variety of the dishonest man. This man believes in the people, shame! He would have universal suffrage, he is a chartist; are you sure of his probity? Here is a republican passing, take care of your pockets. That is clever. All the world is more witty than Voltaire: the English aristocracy has more wit than Macchiavelli.

The king pays, the people do not pay. This is about all the secret of that kind of history. It has also its own tariff of indulgences.

Honour and profit are divided: honour to the master, profit to the historian. Procopius is prefect, and what is more, illustrious by special decree (that does not prevent him from betraying): Bossuet is bishop, Henry is private prior of Argenteuil, Karamsin is senator, Lamartine is prince. But the finest thing is to be paid successively by Far and by Against, and, like Fontanes, to be made senator through idolatry of and peer of France through spitting upon, the same idol.

What is going on at the Louvre? What is going on at the Vatican? in the Seraglio? Buen Retiro? at Windsor? at Schœnbrunn? at Potsdam? at the Kremlin? at Tsarskoe-Selo? No further questions. There is nothing interesting for the human race beyond those ten or twelve houses, of which history is the hour-keeper.

Nothing can be small in relation to war, the warrior, the prince, the throne, the court. He who is not endowed with grave gaiety could not be an historian. A question of etiquette, a hunt, a gala, a grand levee, a procession, the triumph of Maximilian, the number of carriages the ladies have following the king to the ring before Mass, the necessity of having mass augmented with the birth of his majesty, the books of Charles V., the books of Louis XVI., the bed raised by Louis XV. at his coronation, indication of a good king, and how the Prince of Wales sits in the Chamber of the House of Lords, not in the capacity of Prince of Wales, but as Duke of Cornwall, and how the drunken Augustus has appointed Prince Lubomirsky, who is starost of Kasimow, under-cupbearer to the crown; and how Charles of Spain gave the command of the army of Catalonia to Pimentel because the Pimentels have the title of Benavente since 1308; and how Frederic of Brandenburg granted a fief of forty thousand crowns to a huntsman who enabled him to kill a fine stag;

and how Louis Antoine, grand-master of the Teutonic Order and Prince Palatine, died at Liége from displeasure at not being able to make the inhabitants choose him bishop; and how the Princess Borghèse, dowager of Mirandole and of the Papal House, married the Prince of Cellamare, son of the Duke of Giovenazzo; and how my Lord Seaton, who is a Montgomery, followed James II. into France; and how the Emperor ordered the Duke of Mantua, who is vassal of the empire, to drive from his court the Marquis Amorati; and how there are always two Cardinal Barberins living, &c. &c. &c., all that is the important business. A turned-up nose becomes an historical fact. Two small fields contiguous to the old Mark and to the duchy of Zell, having almost embroiled England and Prussia, are memorable. And in reality the cleverness of the governing and the apathy of the governed have arranged and mixed things in such a manner that all those forms of princely nothingness have their place in human destiny, and peace and war, the movement of armies and fleets, the recoil or the progress of civilization, depend on the cup of tea of Queen Anne or the fly-flap of the Dey of Algiers.

History walks behind those fooleries, registering them.

Knowing so many things, it is quite natural that it should be ignorant of others. If you are so curious as to ask the name of the English merchant who, in 1612, first entered China by the north, and that of the worker in glass who, in 1663, first established in France a manufactory of crystal, and of the citizen who carried out, in the States General at Tours, under Charles VIII., the sound principle of elective magistracy—principle which has since been adroitly obliterated—and of the pilot who, in 1405, discovered the Canary Islands, and of the Byzantine lutemaker who, in the eighth century, invented the organ and

gave to music its grandest voice, and of the Campanian mason who invented the clock by establishing at Rome on the temple of Quirinus the first sundial, and of the Roman lighterman who invented the paving of towns by the construction of the Appian Way in the year 312 B.C., and of the Egyptian carpenter who devised the dove-tail, which may be found under the obelisk of Luxor and one of the keys of architecture, and of the Chaldean keeper of flocks who founded astronomy by his observation of the signs of the zodiac, the starting-point taken by Anaximenes, and of the Corinthian calker who, nine years before the first Olympiad, calculated the power of the triple lever, devised the trireme, and created a tow-boat anterior by two thousand six hundred years to the steamboat, and of the Macedonian ploughman who discovered the first gold mine in Mount Pangæus, history does not know what to say to you. Those fellows are unknown to history.

Who is that ? a ploughman, a calker, a shepherd, a carpenter, a lighterman, a mason, a lutemaker, a sailor, and a merchant ? History does not lower itself with such rabble.

There is at Nüremberg, near the Egydienplatz, in a chamber on the second floor of a house which faces the church of St. Giles, on an iron tripod, a little ball of wood twenty inches in diameter, covered with darkish vellum, marked with lines which were once red, yellow, and green. It is a globe on which is sketched out an outline of the divisions of the earth in the fifteenth century. On this globe is vaguely indicated, in the twenty-fourth degree of latitude, under the sign of the Crab, a kind of island named Antilia, which one day attracted the attention of two men ; the one, who had constructed the globe and drawn Antilia, showed this island to the other, placed his finger upon it, and said, " It is there." The man who looked on was called Christopher Columbus,

the man who said "It is there," was called Martin Behaim. Antilia is America. History speaks of Fernando Cortez, who ravaged America, but not of Martin Behaim, who divined it.

Let a man have "cut to pieces" other men, let him have "put them to the sword," let him have made them "bite the dust," horrible locutions become hideously familiar, and search in history for the name of that man, whoever he may be, you will find it. Search for the name of the man who invented the compass, you will not find it.

In 1747, in the eighteenth century, under the gaze even of philosophers, the battles of Raucoux and Lawfeld, the siege of Sas-de-Gand and the taking of Berg-op-Zoom, eclipse and efface that sublime discovery which to-day is in course of modifying the world, electricity.

Voltaire himself, about that year, celebrated passionately some exploit of Trajan (read Louis XV.).

A certain public stupidity is the result of that history which is superposed upon education almost everywhere. If you doubt it, see, among others, the publications of Périsse Brothers, intended by the editors, says a parenthesis, for primary schools.

A prince who gives himself an animal's name makes us laugh. We rail at the Emperor of China, who makes people call him "His Majesty the Dragon," and we placidly say *Monseigneur le Dauphin*.

Domesticity. The historian is then no more than the master of ceremonies of centuries. In the model court of Louis the Great, there are four historians, as there are four chamber violins. Lulli leads the one, Boileau the others.

In that old method of history, the only authorized method up to 1789, and classic in every acceptation of the word, the best narrators, even the honest ones, there are few of them, even those who think themselves free, place themselves mechanically in drill, stitch

tradition to tradition, submit to accepted custom, receive the pass-word from the antechamber, accept, pell-mell with the crowd, the stupid divinity of coarse personages in the foreground, kings, "potentates," "pontifs," soldiers, end, all the time thinking themselves historians, by donning the livery of historiographers, and are lacqueys without knowing it.

That kind of history is taught, is compulsory, is commended and recommended, all young intellects are more or less saturated with it, the mark remains with them, their thought suffers through it and releases itself only with difficulty, we make schoolboys learn it by heart, and I who speak, when a child, was its victim.

In that history there is everything except history. Shows of princes, of "monarchs," and of captains, of the people, of laws, of manners little; of letters, of arts, of sciences, of philosophy, of the universal movement of thought, in one word, of man, nothing. Civilization dates by reigns, and not by progress. Some king or other is one of the stages along the historical road. The true stages, the stages of great men, are nowhere indicated. It explains how Francis II. succeeds to Henri II., Charles IX. to Francis II., and Henri III. to Charles IX.; but no one teaches how Watt succeeds to Papin, and Fulton to Watt; behind the heavy scenery of royal hereditary rights a glimpse of the mysterious dynasty of men of genius is scarcely obtained. The lamp which smokes on the opaque frontage of royal accessions hides the sidereal reflection that the creators of civilization throw over ages. Not an historian of that series points out the divine affiliation of human prodigies, that practical logic of Providence; not one makes us see how progress engenders progress. That Philip IV. comes after Philip III., and Charles II. after Philip IV., it would be shameful not to know; that Descartes continues Bacon, and that Kant continues Descartes, that Las

Casas continues Columbus, that Washington continues Las Casas, and that John Brown continues and rectifies Washington, that John Huss continues Pelagius, that Luther continues John Huss, and that Voltaire continues Luther, it is almost a scandal to be aware of it.

CHAPTER IV.

It is time that it should all be altered.

It is time that the men of action should take their place behind and the men of the idea in front. The summit is the head. Where thought is, there is power. It is time that men of genius should pass before heroes. It is time to render to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, and to the book what is the book's. Such or such a poem, such a drama, such a novel, does more work than all the Courts of Europe together. It is time that history should proportion itself to the reality, that it should allow to each influence its true measure, and that it should cease to place the masks of kings on epochs made in the image of poets and philosophers. To whom belongs the eighteenth century? To Louis XV. or to Voltaire? Confront Versailles with Ferney, and see from which of these two points civilization flows.

A century is a formula; an epoch is a thought expressed. After which, civilization passes to another. Civilization has phrases. These phrases are the centuries. It does not say here what it says there. But these mysterious phrases are bound together by a chain; logic—logos—is within, and their series constitutes progress. All these phrases, expressive of a single idea, the divine idea, write slowly the word Fraternity.

All light is at some point condensed into a flame; in the same way every epoch is condensed into a man. The man having expired, the epoch is closed. God turns the page. Dante dead, is the full-stop put at

the end of the thirteenth century; John Huss can come. Shakespeare dead is the full-stop put at the end of the sixteenth century. After this poet, who contains and sums up every philosophy, the philosophers Pascal, Descartes, Molière, Le Sage, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot, Beaumarchais, can come. Voltaire dead, is the full-stop put at the end of the eighteenth century. The French Revolution, liquidation of the first social form of Christianity, can come.

These different periods, which we name epochs, have all their dominant. What is their dominant? Is it a head that wears a crown? Is it a head that bears a thought? Is it an aristocracy? Is it an idea? Answer yourself. Do you see where the power is? Weigh Francis I. in the scales with Gargantua. Put all chivalry in the scale against "Don Quixote."

Therefore, every one to his right place. Right about, and let us now see the true centuries. In the first rank, minds; in the second, in the third, in the twentieth, soldiers and princes. To the warrior the darkness, to the thinker the pedestal. Take away Alexander, and put there Aristotle. Strange thing that up to this day humanity should have read "The Iliad" in such a manner as to annihilate Homer under Achilles!

I repeat it, it is time that it should all be changed. Moreover, the first impulse is given. Already noble minds are at work; future history approaches; some magnificent partial new handlings of the subject exist as a specimen; a general recasting is imminent. *Ad usum populi.* Obligatory instruction will have true history. True history will be given. It is commenced.

Effigies must be stamped afresh. That which was the reverse will become the medal, and that which was the medal will become the reverse. Urban VIII. will be the reverse of Galileo.

The true profile of the human race will re-appear

on the different proofs of civilization that the series of ages offers.

Historical effigy will no longer be the man-king; it will be the man-people.

Doubtless, and we shall not be reproached for not insisting on it, real and veracious history, in indicating the sources of civilization wherever they may be, will not lose sight of the appreciable quantity of utility in the sceptre-bearers and sword-bearers at a given moment and in a special state of humanity. Certain wrestling struggles necessitate some resemblance between the two combatants; barbarity must sometimes be pitted against savageness. There are cases of progress by violence. Cæsar is good in Cimmeria, and Alexander in Asia. But for Alexander and Cæsar the second rank suffices.

Veracious history, true history, definitive history, henceforth charged with the education of the royal infant, namely, the people, will reject all fiction, will fail in complaisance, will logically classify phenomena, will unravel profound causes, will study philosophically and scientifically the successive commotions of humanity, and will take less account of the great strokes of the sword than of the grand strokes of the idea. The doings of light will pass first. Pythagoras will be a much greater event than Sesostris. We have just said it, heroes, men of the twilight, are relatively luminous in the darkness; but what is a conqueror beside a sage? What is the invasion of kingdoms compared with the opening up of intellects? The winners of minds efface the gainers of provinces. He through whom we think, he is the true conqueror. In future history, the slave Æsop and the slave Plautus will have precedence over kings, and there are vagabonds who will weigh more than certain victors, and comedians who will weigh more than certain emperors. Without doubt, to illustrate what we are saying by means of facts, it is useful that a powerful man should

have marked the halting-place between the ruin of the Latin world and the growth of the Gothic world; it is useful that another powerful man, coming after the first like cunning on the footsteps of daring, should have sketched out under the form of a catholic monarchy the future universal group of nations, and the beneficial encroachments of Europe upon Africa, Asia, and America; but it is more useful yet to have written the *Divina Commedia* and *Hamlet;* no bad action is mixed up with these *chefs-d'œuvre;* there is not here, to lay to the charge of the civilizer, a debt of nations ruined; and, being given, as the result to be obtained, the improvement of the human mind, Dante is of greater importance than Charlemagne, and Shakespeare of greater importance than Charles the Fifth.

In history, as it will be written on the pattern of absolute truth, that intellect, no matter what, that unconscious and trivial being, the *Non pluribus impar*, the Sultan-sun of Marly, is nothing more than the almost mechanical preparer of the shelter needed by the thinker disguised as a buffoon and of the medium of ideas and men required for the philosophy of Alceste, and Louis XIV. makes Molière's bed.

These exchanges of parts will put people in their true light; the historical optic, renewed, will re-adjust the *ensemble* of civilization, still a chaos to-day; perspective, that justice by geometry, will seize the past, making such a plan advance, placing another in the background; every one will assume his real stature; the head-dresses of tiaras and of crowns will only make dwarfs more ridiculous; stupid genuflexions will vanish. From these alterations will proceed right.

That great judge, we ourselves, We All, having henceforth for measure the clear idea of what is absolute and what is relative, defalcations and restitutions will of themselves take place. The innate moral sense within man will know its power. It will no longer be obliged to ask itself questions of this kind; why,

at the same minute, do people revere in Louis XV., altogether with the rest of royalty, the act for which they burn Deschauffours on the Place de Grève? The quality of king will no longer be a false moral weight. Facts fairly placed will place conscience fairly. A good light will come, sweet to the human race, serene, equitable. No interposition of clouds henceforth between truth and the brain of man. A definitive ascent of the good, the just, and the beautiful towards the zenith of civilization.

Nothing can escape the law which simplifies. By the mere force of things, the material side of facts and of men disintegrates and disappears. There is no shadowy solidity. Whatever may be the mass, whatever may be the block, every combination of ashes, and matter is nothing else, returns to ashes. The idea of the atom of dust is in the word granite: inevitable pulverizations. All those granites, oligarchy, aristocracy, theocracy, are promised to the four winds to be scattered by them. The ideal alone is incorruptible.

Nothing lasts save the mind.

In this indefinite increase of light that is called civilization, phenomena of reduction and levelling are accomplished. The imperious morning light penetrates everywhere, enters as master and makes itself obeyed. Light operates; under that great gaze, posterity, before this glare, the nineteenth century, simplifications take place, excrescences fall away, glories exfoliate, names are riven in pieces. Do you wish for an example, take Moses. There is in Moses three glories: the captain, the legislator, the poet. Of these three men contained in Moses, where is the captain to-day? In the shadow, with brigands and murderers. Where is the legislator? Amidst the waste of dead religions. Where is the poet? By the side of Æschylus.

Daylight has an irresistible corroding power on the

things of night. Hence a new historic sky above our heads. Hence a new philosophy of causes and results. Hence a new aspect of facts.

Certain minds, however, whose honest and stern anxiety pleases us, object:—You have said, "Men of genius are a dynasty;" we will not have that dynasty any more than another. This is to misapprehend, and to fear the word where the thing is reassuring. The same law which wills that the human race should have no owners, wills that it should have guides. To be enlightened is quite different from being enslaved. Kings possess, men of genius conduct; there is the difference. Between *homo sum* and *l'état c'est moi*, there is all the distance from fraternity to tyranny. The forward march must have a guide-post; to revolt against the pilot can scarcely improve the ship's course; we do not see what would have been gained by throwing Christopher Columbus into the sea. The direction "this way" has never humiliated the man who seeks his road. I accept in the night the guiding authority of torches. A dynasty of little encumbrance moreover, is that of men of genius, having for a kingdom the exile of Dante, for a palace the dungeon of Cervantes, for a civil list the wallet of Isaiah, for a throne the dunghill of Job, and for a sceptre the staff of Homer.

Let us resume.

CHAPTER V.

HUMANITY, no longer possessed but guided; such is the new aspect of facts.

This new aspect of facts, history henceforth is compelled to reproduce. To change the past, that is strange; it is what history is about to do. By falsehood? No, by speaking true. History was but a picture, she is about to become a mirror.

This new reflection of the past will modify the future.

The former king of Westphalia, who was a witty man, was looking one day at an inkstand on the table of some one we know. The writer, with whom Jerome Bonaparte was at that moment, had brought home from an excursion among the Alps, made some years before in company with Charles Nodier, a piece of steatitic serpentine carved and hollowed in the form of an inkstand, and purchased of the chamois hunters of the *Mer de Glace*. It was this that Jerome Bonaparte was looking at. What is this? he asked. It is my inkstand, said the writer, and, added he, "It is steatite." Admire how nature with a little dirt and oxide has made this charming green stone. I admire much more the men, replied Jerome Bonaparte, who out of this stone made an inkstand.

That was not badly said for a brother of Napoleon, and due credit should be given for it, for the inkstand is to destroy the sword.

The decrease of warriors, men of brutal force and of prey; the undefined and superb growth of men of thought and of peace; the re-appearance on

the scene of the true Colossals: in this is one of the greatest facts of our great epoch.

There is no spectacle more pathetic and sublime; humanity delivered from on high, the powerful ones put to flight by the thinkers, the prophet overwhelming the hero, the rout of force by the idea, the sky cleaned, a majestic expulsion.

Look, raise your eyes, the supreme epopee is accomplished. The legions of light drive backwards the hordes of flame.

Departure of the masters, arrival of the liberators.

Those who hunt down nations, who drag armies behind them, Nimrod, Sennacherib, Cyrus, Rameses, Xerxes, Cambyses, Attila, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Alexander, Cæsar, Bonaparte, all these immense wild men, are disappearing.

They die away slowly, behold them touch the horizon, they are mysteriously attracted by the darkness; they claim kindred with the shade; thence their fatal descent; their resemblance to other phenomena of the night restores them to that terrible unity of blind immensity, a submersion of all light. Forgetfulness, shadow of the shadow, awaits them.

They are thrown down, but they remain formidable. Let us not insult what has been great. Hooting would be unbecoming before the burying of heroes. The thinker should remain grave in presence of this donning of shrouds. The old glory abdicates; the strong lie down; mercy for those vanquished conquerors! peace to those warlike spirits now extinguished! the sepulchral disappearance interposes between their glare and ourselves. It is not without a kind of religious terror that one sees planets become spectres.

Whilst, on the side of the engulfing, the flaming pleiad of the men of brutal force descends deeper and deeper into the abyss with the sinister pallor of approaching disappearance, at the other extremity of space, where the last cloud is about to fade

away, in the deep heaven of the future, azure henceforth, rises in radiancy the sacred group of true stars: Orpheus, Hermes, Job, Homer, Æschylus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hippocrates, Phidias, Socrates, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes, Euclid, Pythagoras, Lucretius, Plautus, Juvenal, Tacitus, St. Paul, John of Patmos, Tertullian, Pelagius, Dante, Gutenberg, Joan of Arc, Christopher Columbus, Luther, Michael Angelo, Copernicus, Galileo, Rabelais, Calderon, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Kepler, Milton, Molière, Newton, Descartes, Kant, Piranesi, Beccaria, Diderot, Voltaire, Beethoven, Fulton, Montgolfier, Washington; and the marvellous constellation, at each instant more luminous, dazzling as a glory of celestial diamonds, shines in the clear horizon and ascends, mingled with that immense Aurora—Jesus Christ.

THE END.

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